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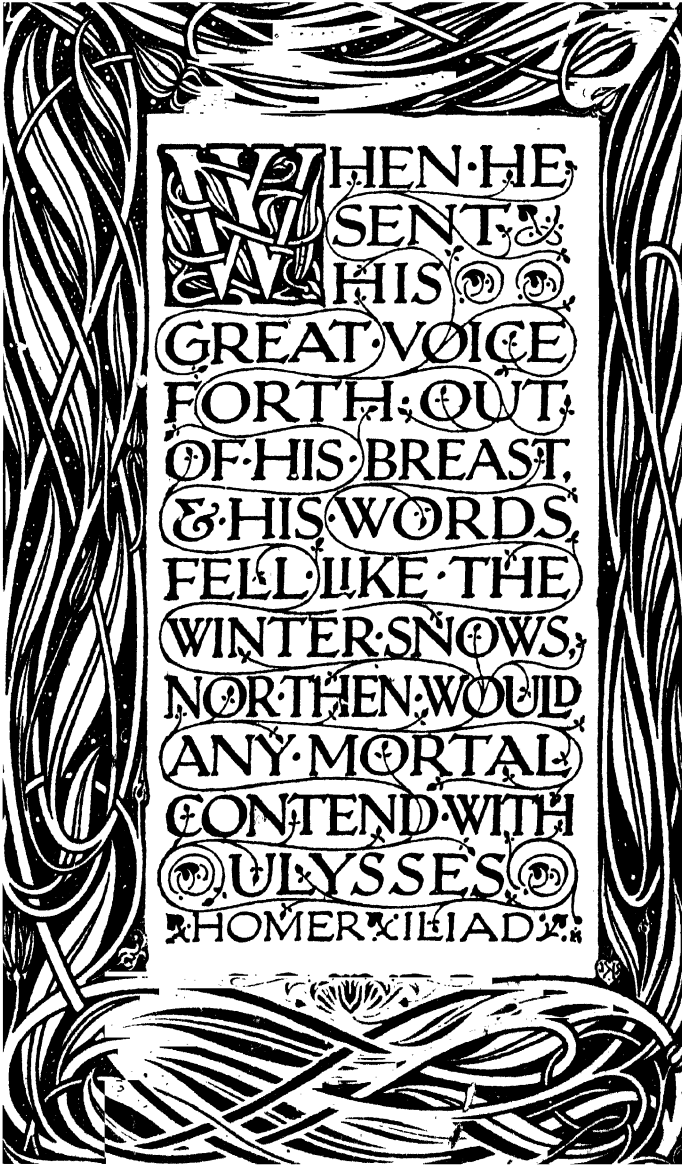
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WHEN HE  
SENT  
HIS  
GREAT VOICE  
FORTH OUT  
OF HIS BREAST,  
& HIS WORDS  
FELL LIKE THE  
WINTER SNOWS,  
NORTHEN WOULD  
ANY MORTAL  
CONTEND WITH  
ULYSSES.  
HOMER ILLIAD.

CHARLES JAMES  
FOX: SPEECHES  
During the FRENCH  
REVOLUTIONARY  
WAR PERIOD ☉



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1914

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## INTRODUCTION

THE first and only complete edition of the speeches of Charles James Fox was made by Mr. Wright in 1815, just before the end of that long war with France, to the conduct of whose early stages the speeches here republished were directed in unflagging criticism. In his preface to that edition Lord Erskine declared himself unwilling to revive controversy then so recent, and connected with a war which was not yet over, by any detailed statement of Fox's opinions on the great question of the French Revolution. But the outline which he gave of Fox's attitude to the outbreak of war in 1793 is none the worse for giving only the main argument of his opposition, since it enables us better to see how closely that attitude agrees with what is now the most widely-accepted verdict of history. Time and "the impartiality of a future generation," to which Lord Erskine confidently left his friend's reputation, have vindicated Fox's opinions, and it is far less necessary now than it was in 1815 to undertake his defence. There are to-day few serious students of history who would challenge Fox's main contention that the coalition of England and the Continental Powers contributed much more to increase than to diminish the frenzy which so dishonoured the Revolution, or who would deny that coalition's responsibility for the long and dreadful struggle between England and France which ended at Waterloo. And though it may be that war with the revolutionary government could not ultimately have been avoided by this country, that consideration does not alter the value of the protests made by Fox in 1793 against the too ready acceptance of this conclusion and of the principle which he so constantly urged, that war should not be assumed to be inevitable until all possible means of negotiation have been tried and found useless. In furtherance of this principle he appealed throughout his speeches for a clear definition of the objects of the war, showing—and his showing is now the almost undisputed admission of historians—that none of the so-called "specific causes" of the war had been properly submitted to negotiation or were reconcilable with the facts of the case and

the policy of the government. It is in the analysis of this aspect of the war, in the exposure of the absence of definite policy and of the inconsistencies of Ministerial profession and practice—inconsistencies so glaring as to make the denial of them not only stupid but hypocritical—that Fox's speeches are finest. Imperfectly reported as they were, the rough notes reveal, as Lord Erskine wrote in 1815, the "bones of a giant" who, whatever his failings, was open in acknowledgment of them, and above all things hated hypocrisy.

There is no need to dwell upon, or to sentimentalise over, his faults: their catalogue is rarely avoided by historians. Fox, the profligate, the gambler, is a familiar figure in the gallery of eighteenth-century statesmen, the more remarkable by contrast with the austere and decorous, though not always sober, Pitt. Few great Englishmen have been more truly antagonists than William Pitt and Charles Fox, opposites not only in party politics but in character; the one deliberate, cool and restrained, the other, impetuous, ardent and passionate. Charles Fox is one of the greatest of those who, lacking neither disposition nor opportunity for a life of self-indulgence and vice, have yet kept inviolate all the generous and noble human instincts which are the mainstay of such good as there is in the world and the promise of more good in the future. That Fox was universally loved, that of him Horace Walpole, by no means a fond critic, wrote, "I do not believe that he had one bad, black or base object," are facts more important to remember than the story of his dissipated youth and the sum of his debts at Brooks'. The qualities for which, in his private life, men and women loved him were the same as those which made Liberty, Peace and the Abolition of the Slave Trade the objects of his political life, and they were, too, the qualities which, in his speeches, bound, as Lord Erskine says, "even his adversaries in a kind of spell." His appearance was clumsy, untidy and dirty—as like as possible, probably, to the pictures Gillray drew of him—a bulky, rolling, vehement figure; black, tawny head and heavy, unshaven jaw; his shirt undone at the neck; his clothes, the famous blue coat and buff waistcoat, tumbled and baggy, one stocking sure to be slipping down. He made violent gestures, his words came tempestuously, and in passionate bursts of exclamation, he said the same thing over and over again. But there was, it is said, a "more than mortal energy in his speaking," beside which even his great intellectual gifts, his grasp of facts, his

memory and his power of argument were forgotten. And it was this which conquered—often overruling considerations of form, length and restraint of language, but by its very disregard of strict oratorical graces proclaiming its dictator to be his heart, a heart not moved, as Burke's was, by an imagination so tyrannous that it banished judgment, but lending the whole stupendous torrent of its feeling to the carriage of what his judgment considered to be the truth. This side of his eloquence report, however faithful, and the printed page cannot wholly restore; but still, for those readers who have imagination, there are passages, even mere sentences, in his speeches which preserve it.

What, shall we treat with Tyrants? Do we not daily treat with Tyrants? Shall we submit to treat with the present government of France? Submit to what? Submit to the French having a bad government? Have we not submitted to it for more than a century? Have we ever found ourselves uneasy under our submission to Persia having a bad government? Have we not submitted to all the injustice, cruelty and slaughter perpetrated in Poland?

Much of the thunder and irony with which Fox invested these questions still echoes as we read them, and more than ghostly agony of mind and indignation linger in his appeal to the House of Commons (3rd February, 1800) to give a definite answer to Bonaparte's overtures of peace, rather than continue the war "without an intelligible motive—all this because you may gain a better peace a year or two hence! Gracious God, Sir! is war a state of probation? Is peace a rash system? Is it dangerous for nations to live in amity with each other?"

Charles James Fox, the third son of the first Lord Holland, was born in 1749; he died in 1806, only a few months after the death of his great rival, William Pitt. He first entered the House of Commons as member for Midhurst in 1769, but his true political career did not begin until 1774, when he finally broke from the Tories and the political influences of his boyhood and early youth. I do not want to take up the few pages allowed to a short preface with the detailed sequence of his parliamentary career. This can be followed in Sir George Trevelyan's two books on Fox, *Lord John Russell's Life and Times of C. J. Fox*, and the same author's edition of Lord Holland's *Memorials and Letters of his uncle*, all of which, and others besides, are easily accessible. Important as this sequence is from the chronicler's point of view, it does not so much convey the outcome of Fox's opinions as the way in



which his career, and especially the short terms of his official life, were determined by political accidents arising from the intricacies of the party machine and from the action of arbitrary outside forces. He had to contend with much more than the unpopularity of his political opinions, so much more that even when these triumphed, as they did at the end of the American War, their triumph did not benefit him; against him were the weight of prejudiced agencies of which the king was the fountain-head and the skill of men more versed in political strategy than he was. Fox was not a great politician—he was handicapped by honesty. It was not in his nature to accommodate himself to the complications of the parliamentary machine, and his one rash attempt at such accommodation, the much-censured coalition with Lord North (never, ironically enough, forgotten by politicians), was thwarted by the singular strategic genius of William Pitt. It is the same, perhaps, throughout the history of politics, that they reflect much more the interplay of the accidental than of the intrinsic forces at issue. But it is particularly noticeable in the career of Fox, from whose hands mischance was so prompt to snatch the fruits of a long and faithful sowing. And in the whole course of history, between the end of the American War in 1783 and the beginning of the French War in 1793, the reflection of what might have been, had mischance not intervened, seems so persistent, so to haunt what actually was, that the speculation seems more justifiable than such speculation usually is. Certain events in history do appear more powerful than others in determining the future; in them indeed seems to lie the source of those tides which carry affairs into unforeseen channels. The downfall of Fox and the Whig Party in 1784 is of this eventful character, and that it was brought about by mistakes on Fox's part as well as royal and party prejudices does not, I think, prevent its being considered an accident. For Fox's mistakes—the coalition with Lord North and the line of resistance which he took against the king's dismissal of it in 1784—were not previous to, but followed upon, the intrusion of court influence which had caused his resignation from the Rockingham administration in 1783: they were his ill-judged efforts to get the upper hand of that obstinate person who, as Lord Townshend relates in his *Memoirs*, when Fox kissed hands on his appointment, "turned back his ears and eyes just like the horse at Astley's when the tailor he had determined to throw was

getting on him." That Fox was wrong in mounting as he did, with Lord North holding his stirrup, no one will deny. Both from the point of view of his personal reputation and of Whig interests the coalition with Lord North was quite disastrous. Not only did it discredit the motives of Fox's previous refusal to work with a court instrument, Lord Shelburne, but it so shuffled natural party divisions as to free neither party from the principles and influence which had ruled the old administration, and to withhold from both the laurels of victory which the Whigs had so recently and so unmistakably won. As Lord John Russell wrote:

When the American war was put a stop to by the vote of the House of Commons, those who had been the opponents of that ruinous war should have been the Ministers—that is to say, Lord Rockingham, Lord Shelburne, the Dukes of Richmond and Portland, Lord Camden, Burke, Fox, Pitt and Sheridan should have been in office: and Lord North, Lord Gower, Mr. Dundas and Lord Stormont in opposition. Unfortunately the dissensions of the Whigs and the fatal Coalition broke up these natural alliances. Lord North and Lord Stormont acted with Fox; Lord Gower and Mr. Dundas with Pitt. Thus while Fox bore all the odium of joining Lord North, the principles of the Tory party which led to that war were represented by Lord Gower and Mr. Dundas and animated the victorious policy of Pitt.

But the most unfortunate consequence of all was the lasting separation of Fox and Pitt. There was less reason than in the case of most great men born to be leaders why these two should not have worked together, for Fox was not jealous of power, and cared for no other office than that of Foreign Secretaryship, which Pitt, who knew little of Foreign Affairs, would have been willing to leave to him. Both were Whigs, Pitt by tradition and Fox by conviction, and both supported the causes of freedom and progress. Opportunism made Pitt an instrument of reaction during the last years of his life and the advocate of a war which put an end to all his great administrative and financial reforms. The same forces of court and Tory favour which in 1784 had placed and kept him secure in office, in 1793 could no longer be held except by submission to their yelping will—he had to accept the policy which these were vociferous for, and that policy, needless to say, was war. Together, Fox and Pitt might have kept England neutral, but the obstacle to their union lay, as is too often the case in political emergencies, not in their individual opinions, but in the position of party affairs. Circumstance

triumphed. Pitt mounted its rickety platform while Fox, scorning such agility, stayed on the ground of opposition. Many, in spirit, have since visited him there—without pity; put out of conceit with political success in watching his courage, his never-subjugated hopes, his complete freedom from regretting his dissuasion from the battle, his sufficient comfort that he was no shareholder in the catastrophe which, month after month, year after year, became more terrible and apparently endless.

All the speeches in this volume were delivered during this period. In 1797 Fox retired from a hopeless parliamentary situation, but returned in 1800 to make the last speech republished here.

IRENE COOPER WILLIS.

The following is a list of works by or relating to C. J. Fox:—

**SPEECHES.**—The Speeches of the Right Hon. C. J. Fox in the House of Commons (ed. by J. Wright, with an introductory letter by Lord Erskine), 6 vols., 1815; Account of the proceedings in Palace Yard, Nov. 26, 1795; including the substance of the speeches of Mr. Fox, etc., 1795; The Genuine Speech of C. J. Fox, spoken at the Whig Club of England, Dec. 4, 1792; The Speech of the Hon. C. J. Fox, delivered at Westminster, Feb. 2, 1780, on the Reproduction of Sinecure Places and Unmerited Pensions, 1780; The celebrated Speech of C. J. Fox, with the Proceedings of the Meeting at the Shakespeare Tavern, Oct. 10, 1800; Sketch of the Character of the most noble Francis, Duke of Bedford, by the Hon. C. J. Fox, as delivered in his introductory speech to a motion for a new writ for Tavistock, on March 16, 1802.

**WORKS.**—The State of the Negotiation [between Great Britain and France], with Details of its Progress and Causes of its Termination in the Recall of the Earl of Lauderdale, etc. (by the Right Hon. C. J. Fox), 1806; A History of the Early Part of the Reign of James II., with an introductory chapter. To which is added an appendix containing: Correspondence between Louis XIV. and M. Barillon, on English affairs, etc.; Bill for the Preservation of the King's Person, etc., ed. by Lord Holland, 1808; A Letter from C. J. Fox to the Worthy and Independent Electors of the City and Liberty of Westminster [stating his reasons for the different motions made by him in the House of Commons, dated Jan. 26, 1793], 2nd ed., 1793; An entire new work: Fox's Martyrs; or a New Book of the Sufferings of the Faithful [satirising individually the members of the House of Commons], 2nd ed., 1784; Extracts relating to the War of American Independence, from the Letters of C. J. Fox, as published in the edition of 1815, 1870; Sketches of the Characters of Charles I. and II. and Oliver Cromwell. Contained in the Introductory Chapter to the History of the Early Part of the Reign of James II., by C. J. Fox ("Tracts for the People, etc." No. 3), 1839.

**MEMOIRS, ETC.**—The Life of the Right Hon. C. J. Fox, comprehending a brief view of the times in which he lived; some account of his principal contemporaries; his occasional verses and other productions, 1807; Memoirs of the Life of C. J. Fox, the man of the people, etc. [A chap-book] (1820?); History of his Political Life and Public Services, 1783:

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The Contrast, or Two Portraits of the Right Hon. C. J. Fox, 1793; Circumstantial Details of the Long Illness and Last Moments of C. J. Fox (with strictures on his public and private life), 1806; Characteristics, by C. J. Palmer; Memoirs of Public Life of the late C. J. Fox, 1808; Memoirs of Latter Years of Fox, by J. B. Trotter, 1811; Memorials and Correspondence of C. J. Fox, ed. by Lord John Russell, 1853-57; Life and Times of C. J. Fox, by Lord John Russell, 1859-66; Early History of C. J. Fox, by Sir G. O. Trevelyan, 1880; George III. and C. Fox, by Sir G. O. Trevelyan, 1912-14; C. J. Fox, a Study by J. M. Le B. Hammond, 1903.



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# THE SPEECHES OF CHARLES JAMES FOX

## MR. FOX'S AMENDMENTS TO THE ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION

*December 13, 1792.*

THE King's Speech announced that it had been thought necessary to call up part of the militia and to increase the country's naval and military forces. The reasons advanced were that a spirit of tumult and disorder had shown itself in acts of riot and insurrection which had evidently proceeded from foreign instigators. Despite the fact that strict neutrality in the present continental war had been observed, it was alleged that there were indications in France of a wish to excite disturbances in other countries, to disregard the rights of neutral nations and to pursue views of conquest and aggrandisement which could not be viewed without serious uneasiness and suspicion. An address, approving the speech, was moved by Sir J. Saunderson, the Lord Mayor of London, and seconded by Mr. Wallace. The Earl of Wycombe opposed the address on the ground that it calumniated the people of England, who were at that moment overflowing with loyalty. As soon as the noble earl had concluded,

Mr. Fox rose and said: Although, Sir, what has fallen from the noble earl behind me contains the substance of almost all that I have to offer, and although it must have produced the effects which good sense, truth, and solid argument never fail to produce on a great body, the tacit acknowledgment of all who heard him, insomuch that no one seemed ready to venture to rise up in answer to the noble earl, yet I cannot avoid offering my opinion on the present most critical and most alarming occasion. I am not so little acquainted with the nature of man, as not to know that in public speaking, in order to engage the attention of the hearers, besides the efficacy of fair and candid reasoning, a man ought always to be in temper and unison with his audience. He ought to show that, however they may differ upon points, they are still pursuing in reality the same object, namely, the love of truth. With this object in view, I shall, Sir, state explicitly what are my sentiments on the subjects



now presented to our notice by the speech from the throne. And first, I state it to be my conviction that we are assembled at the most critical and momentous crisis, not only that I have ever known, but that I have ever read of in the history of this country—a crisis not merely interesting to ourselves but to all nations; and that on the conduct of parliament at this crisis depends not only the fate of the British constitution, but the future happiness of mankind.

His majesty's speech, Sir, is full of a variety of assertions, or perhaps I should not make use of the word assertions without adding that it has also a variety of insinuations conveyed in the shape of assertions, which must impress every man with the most imminent apprehensions for the safety of everything that is justly dear to Englishmen. It is our first duty to inquire into the truth of these assertions and insinuations so conveyed to us from the throne. I am sure I need not recur to the old parliamentary usage of declaring that when I speak of the king's speech I mean to be considered as speaking of the speech of the minister, since no one, I trust, will impute to me a want of due and sincere respect for his majesty. It is the speech which his majesty has been advised, by his confidential servants, to deliver from the throne. They are responsible for every letter of it, and to them, and them only, every observation is addressed. I state it, therefore, to be my firm opinion, that there is not one fact asserted in his majesty's speech which is not false—not one assertion or insinuation which is not unfounded. Nay, I cannot be so uncandid as to believe that even the ministers themselves think them true. This charge upon his majesty's ministers is of so serious a kind, that I do not pronounce it lightly; and I desire that gentlemen will go fairly into the consideration of the subject, and manifest the proper spirit of the representatives of the people in such a moment. What the noble earl said is most strictly true. The great, prominent feature of the speech is, that it is an intolerable calumny on the people of Great Britain; an insinuation of so gross and so black a nature that it demands the strictest inquiry, and the most severe punishment.

The next assertion is, that there exists at this moment an insurrection in this kingdom. An insurrection! Where is it? Where has it reared its head? Good God! an insurrection in Great Britain! No wonder that the militia were called out, and parliament assembled in the extraordinary way in which they have been. But where is it? Two gentlemen have delivered

sentiments in commendation and illustration of the speech; and yet, though this insurrection has existed for fourteen days, they have given us no light whatever, no clue, no information where to find it. The right honourable magistrate tells us that, in his high municipal situation, he has received certain information which he does not think proper to communicate to us. This is really carrying the doctrine of confidence to a length indeed. Not content with ministers leading the House of Commons into the most extravagant and embarrassing situations under the blind cover of confidence, we are now told that a municipal magistrate has information of an insurrection, which he does not choose to lay before the Commons of England, but which he assures us is sufficient to justify the alarm that has spread over the whole country! The honourable gentleman who seconded the motion tells us that the "insurrections are too notorious to be described." Such is the information which we receive from the right honourable magistrate, and the honourable gentleman, who have been selected to move and second the address. I will take upon me to say, Sir, that it is not the notoriety of the insurrections which prevents those gentlemen from communicating to us the particulars, but their non-existence.

The speech goes on in the same strain of calumny and falsehood, and says, "the industry employed to excite discontent on various pretexts, and in different parts of the kingdom, has appeared to proceed from a design to attempt the destruction of our happy constitution, and the subversion of all order and government." I beseech gentlemen to consider the import of these words, and I demand of their honour and truth if they believe this assertion to be founded in fact. There have been, as I understand, and as every one must have heard, some slight riots in different parts of the country, but I ask them, were not the various pretexts of these different tumults false, and used only to cover an attempt to destroy our happy constitution? I have heard of a tumult at Shields, of another at Leith, of some riot at Yarmouth, and of something of the same nature at Perth and Dundee. I ask gentlemen if they believe that in each of these places the avowed object of the complaint of the people was not the real one—that the sailors at Shields, Yarmouth, etc., did not really want some increase of their wages, but were actuated by a design of overthrowing the constitution? Is there a man in England who believes this insinuation to be true? And in like manner of every other meeting, to which, in

## 4 ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH

the present spirit, men may give the name of tumultuous assembling. I desire to know if there has been discovered any motive other than their open and avowed one. And yet, with this conviction in our minds, we are called upon to declare directly our belief and persuasion that these things are so. We are called upon to join in the libel upon our constituents. The answer to the speech says that we know of the tumult and disorder, but as to the actual insurrection, it more modestly makes us say, "that we are sorry to hear there is an insurrection." Of the tumults and disorders, then, we have personal knowledge; but the insurrection we learn from his majesty's speech!

I do not wish to enter at length into the affairs of France, which form the next prominent passage in his majesty's speech; but though I do not desire to enter at length into this part, I cannot conceal my sentiments on certain doctrines which I have heard this night. The honourable gentleman who seconded the motion thought proper to say, as a proof that there existed a dangerous spirit in this country, that it was manifested "by the drooping and dejected aspect of many persons, when the tidings of Dumourier's surrender arrived in England." What, Sir, is this to be considered as a sign of discontent, and of a preference to republican doctrines? That men should droop and be dejected in their spirits when they heard that the armies of despotism had triumphed over an army fighting for liberty; if such dejection be a proof that men are discontented with the constitution of England, and leagued with foreigners in an attempt to destroy it, I give myself up to my country as a guilty man, for I freely confess that when I heard of the surrender or retreat of Dumourier, and that there was a probability of the triumph of the armies of Austria and Prussia over the liberties of France, my spirits drooped, and I was dejected. What, Sir, could any man who loves the constitution of England, who feels its principles in his heart, wish success to the Duke of Brunswick, after reading a manifesto<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following is a copy of the Duke of Brunswick's Manifesto:

"When their majesties the Emperor and the King of Prussia entrusted me with the command of their armies, which have since entered France, and rendered me the organ of their intentions, expressed in the two declarations of the 25th and 27th of July, 1792, their majesties were incapable of supposing the scenes of horror which have preceded and brought on the imprisonment of the royal family of France. Such enormities, of which the history of the most barbarous nations hardly furnishes an example, were not, however, the ultimate point to which the same audacious demagogues aspired.

"The suppression of the king's functions, which had been reserved to him by the constitution (so long boasted as expressing the national wish),

which violated every doctrine that Englishmen hold sacred, which trampled under foot every principle of justice and humanity and freedom and true government; and upon which the combined armies entered the kingdom of France, with which they had nothing to do; and when he heard or thought that he saw a probability of their success, could any man possessing true British feelings be other than dejected? I honestly confess, Sir, that I never felt more sincere gloom and dejection in my life; for I saw in the triumph of that conspiracy, not merely the ruin of liberty in France, but the ruin of liberty in England; the ruin of the liberty of man. But am I to be

was the last crime of the National Assembly, and which has brought on France the two dreadful scourges of war and anarchy. There is but one step more necessary to perpetuate those evils; and a thoughtless caprice, the forerunner of the fall of nations, has overwhelmed those who qualify themselves the substitutes of the nation, to confirm its happiness and rights on the most solid basis. The first decree of their convention was the abolition of royalty in France; and the unqualified acclamations of a few individuals, some of whom are strangers, has been thought of sufficient weight to overbalance the opinions of fourteen centuries, during which the French monarchy has existed.

"This proceeding, at which only the enemies of France could rejoice, if they could suppose its effects lasting, is directly contrary to the firm resolution which their majesties the Emperor and the King of Prussia have adopted, and from which they will never depart,—that of restoring his Most Christian Majesty to his liberty, safety, and royal dignity, or to take exemplary vengeance on those who dare to continue their insults.

"For these reasons, the undersigned declares to the French nation in general, and to every individual in particular, that their majesties the Emperor and the King of Prussia, invariably attached to the principle of not interfering in the internal government of France, persist equally in requiring that his Most Christian Majesty and all the royal family shall be instantly set at liberty by those who now imprison them.—Their majesties insist also that the royal dignity shall, without delay, be re-established in France in the person of Louis XVI. and his successors; and that measures may be taken in order that the royal dignity may not again be liable to the insult to which it is now subject. If the French nation have not entirely lost sight of their real interests, and if, free in their resolutions, they wish to end the calamities of war, which expose so many provinces to the evils inseparable from armies, they will not hesitate a moment to declare their acquiescence with the peremptory demands which I address to them in the name of the Emperor and King of Prussia; and which, if refused, must inevitably bring on this kingdom, lately so flourishing, new and more terrible misfortunes.

"The measures which the French nation may adopt, in consequence of this declaration, must either extend and perpetuate the dreadful effects of an unhappy war, in destroying, by the abolition of monarchy, the means of renewing the ancient connections which subsisted between France and the sovereigns of Europe, or those measures may open the way to negotiations for the re-establishment of peace, order, and tranquillity, which those who name themselves the deputies of the national will are most interested in restoring speedily to the nation.

"C. F. DUKE OF BRUNSWICK LUNENBURG.

"Hans, 28th September, 1792."

## 6 ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH

told that my sorrow was an evident proof of my being connected with the French nation, or with any persons in that nation, for the purpose of aiding them in creating discontents in England, or in making any attempt to destroy the British constitution? If such a conclusion were to be drawn from the dejection of those who are hostile to the maxims of tyranny, upon which the invasion of France was founded, what must we say of those men who acknowledge that they are sorry the invasion did not prosper? Am I to believe that the honourable gentlemen, and all others, who confess their sorrow at the failure of Prussia and Austria, were connected with the courts in concert, and that a considerable body of persons in this country were actually in the horrid league formed against human liberty? Are we taught to bring this heavy charge against all those whose spirits drooped on the reverse of the news, and when it turned out that it was not Dumourier, but the Duke of Brunswick who had retreated? No; he would not charge them with being confederates with the invaders of France; nor did they believe, nor could they believe, that the really constitutional men of England, who rejoiced at the overthrow of that horrid and profligate scheme, wished to draw therefrom anything hostile to the established government of England.

But what, Sir, are the doctrines that they desire to set up by this insinuation of gloom and dejection? That Englishmen are not to dare to have any genuine feelings of their own; that they must not rejoice but by rule; that they must not think but by order; that no man shall dare to exercise his faculties in contemplating the objects that surround him, nor give way to the indulgence of his joy or grief in the emotions that they excite, but according to the instructions that he shall receive. That, in observing the events that happen to surrounding and neutral nations, he shall not dare to think whether they are favourable to the principles that contribute to the happiness of man, or the contrary; and that he must take, not merely his opinions, but his sensations from his majesty's ministers and their satellites for the time being! Sir, whenever the time shall come that the character and spirits of Englishmen are so subdued; when they shall consent to believe that everything which happens around is indifferent both to their understandings and their hearts; and when they shall be brought to rejoice and grieve just as it shall suit the taste, the caprice, or the ends of ministers, then I pronounce the constitution of this country to be extinct. We have read, Sir, of religious perse-

cutions, of the implacable oppressions of the Roman see, of the horrors of the inquisition of Spain; but so obdurate, so hard, so intolerable a scheme of cruelty, was never engendered in the mind of, much less practised by, any tyrant, spiritual or temporal. For see to what lengths they carry this system of intellectual oppression! "On various pretexts there have been tumults and disorders, but the true design was the destruction of our happy constitution." So says the speech; and mark the illustration of the right honourable magistrate: "There have been various societies established in the city of London, instituted for the plausible purpose of merely discussing constitutional questions, but which were really designed to propagate seditious doctrines." So, then, by this new scheme of tyranny, we are not to judge of the conduct of men by their overt acts, but are to arrogate to ourselves at once the province and the power of the Deity: we are to arraign a man for his secret thoughts, and to punish him because we choose to believe him guilty! "You tell me, indeed," says one of these municipal inquisitors, "that you meet for an honest purpose, but I know better: your plausible pretext shall not impose upon me: I know your seditious design: I will brand you for a traitor by my own proper authority." What innocence can be safe against such a power? What inquisitor of Spain, of ancient or of modern tyranny, can hold so lofty a tone? Well and nobly and seasonably has the noble earl said—and I would not weaken the sentiment by repeating it in terms less forcible than his own, but that eternal truth cannot suffer by the feebleness of the terms in which it is conveyed—"There are speculative people in this country who disapprove of the system of our government, and there must be such men as long as the land is free; for it is of the very essence of freedom for men to differ upon speculative points." Is it possible to conceive that it should enter into the imaginations of freemen to doubt this truth? The instant that the general sense of the people shall question this truth, and that opinion shall be held dependent on the will of ministers and magistrates, from that moment I date the extinction of our liberties as a people. Our constitution was not made, thank God! in a day. It is the result of gradual and progressive wisdom. Never has the protecting genius of England been either asleep or satisfied.

O but man, proud man!  
Drest in a little brief authority,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,  
As make the angels weep.

## 8 ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH

Now, it seems, the constitution is complete—now we are to stand still. We are to deride the practice and the wisdom of our forefathers; we are to elevate ourselves with the constitution in our hands, and to hold it forth to a wondering world as a model of human perfection. Away with all further improvement, for it is impossible! Away with all further amelioration of the state of man in society, for it is needless! Let no man touch this work of man; it is like the work of heaven, perfect in all its parts, and, unlike every other work of man, it is neither capable of perversion nor subject to decay! Such is the presumptuous language that we hear; and, not content with this haughty tone, they imitate the celebrated anathema of brother Pēter in the *Tale of a Tub*, and exclaim, “G—d confound you both eternally if you offer to believe otherwise.”

Now this, Sir, is the crisis which I think so truly alarming. We are come to the moment when the question is whether we shall give to the king, that is, to the executive government, complete power over our thoughts: whether we are to resign the exercise of our natural faculties to the ministers for the time being, or whether we shall maintain that in England no man is criminal but by the commission of overt acts forbidden by the law. This I call a crisis more imminent and tremendous than any that the history of this country ever exhibited. I am not so ignorant of the present state of men's minds, and of the ferment artfully created, as not to know that I am now advancing an opinion likely to be unpopular. It is not the first time that I have incurred the same hazard. But I am as ready to meet the current of popular opinion now running in favour of those high lay doctrines as in the year 1783 I was to meet the opposite torrent, when it was said that I wished to sacrifice the people to the crown. I will do now as I did then. I will act against the cry of the moment, in the confidence that the good sense and reflection of the people will bear me out. I know well that there are societies who have published opinions, and circulated pamphlets, containing doctrines tending, if you please, to subvert our establishments. I say that they have done nothing unlawful in this; for these pamphlets have not been suppressed by law. Show me the law that orders these books to be burnt, and I will acknowledge the illegality of their proceedings: but if there be no such law, ~~you~~ violate the law in acting without authority. You have taken upon you to do that for which you have no warrant; you have voted them to be guilty. What is the course prescribed by law? If any

doctrines are published tending to subvert the constitution in church and state, you may take cognisance of the fact in a court of law. What have you done? Taken upon you by your own authority to suppress them—to erect every man, not merely into an inquisitor, but into a judge, a spy, an informer—to set father against father, brother against brother, and neighbour against neighbour, and in this way you expect to maintain the peace and tranquillity of the country! You have gone upon the principles of slavery in all your proceedings: you neglect in your conduct the foundation of all legitimate government, the rights of the people: and, setting up this bugbear, you spread a panic for the very purpose of sanctifying this infringement, while, again, the very infringement engenders the evil which you dread. One extreme naturally leads to another. Those who dread republicanism fly for shelter to the crown. Those who desire reform and are calumniated are driven by despair to republicanism. And this is the evil that I dread!

These are the extremes into which these violent agitations hurry the people, to the gradual decrease of that middle order of men who shudder as much at republicanism on the one hand as they do at despotism on the other. That middle order of men who have hitherto preserved to this country all that is dear in life, I am sorry to say it, is daily lessening; but permit me to add that while my feeble voice continues it shall not be totally extinct; there shall at least be one man who will, in this ferment of extremes, preserve the centre point. I may be abused by one side, I may be libelled by the other; I may be branded at one and the same time with the terms of firebrand and lukewarm politician; but though I love popularity, and own that there is no external reward so dear to me as the good opinion and confidence of my fellow-citizens, yet no temptation whatever shall ever induce me to join any association that has for its object a change in the basis of our constitution, or an extension of that basis beyond the just proportion. I will stand in the gap, and oppose myself to all the wild projects of a new-fangled theory, as much as against the monstrous iniquity of exploded doctrines. I conceive the latter to be more our present danger than the former. I see, not merely in the panic of the timorous, but in the acts of the designing, cause for alarm against the most abhorrent doctrines. The new associations have acted with little disguise. One of them, the association for preserving liberty and property against republicans and levellers, I must applaud for the sincerity of its practice. Mr. Chairman Reeves



says that they will not only *prosecute*, but they will *convince* men, and they recommend, among other publications, a hand-bill entitled *One Pennyworth of Truth from Thomas Bull to his brother John*, in which, among other odd things, it is said, "Have you not read the Bible? Do you not know that it is there written that kings are the Lord's anointed? But whoever heard of an anointed republic?" Such is the manner in which these associations are to "convince" the minds of men! In the course of the present century, their recommendation would have been prosecuted as high treason. In the years 1715 and 1745, the person who dared to say that kings derived their power from divine right would have been prosecuted for treason; and I ask if, even now, this is the way to inculcate the principles of genuine loyalty? No, Sir, thank God, the people of this country have a better ground of loyalty to the house of Brunswick than that of divine right, namely, that they are the sovereigns of their own election; that their right is not derived from superstition, but from the choice of the people themselves; that it originated in the only genuine fountain of all royal power, the will of the many; and that it has been strengthened and confirmed by the experience of the blessings they have enjoyed, because the house of Brunswick has remembered the principles upon which they received the crown. It is rather extraordinary, Sir, that such language should be held at this precise moment: that it should be thought right to abuse republics at the very moment that we are called upon to protect the republic of Holland. To spread the doctrine that kings only govern by divine right may indispose your allies to receive your proposed succour. They may not choose to receive into their country your admirals and generals who, being appointed by this king in divine right, must partake of the same anger, and be supposed sworn enemies to all forms of government not so sanctified. Surely, independent of the falsehood and the danger of preaching up such doctrines at home, it is the height of impolicy at this time to hold them in regard even to our neighbours. It may be asked, would I prosecute such papers? To this I answer very candidly, I would not. I never yet saw the seditious paper that I would have thought it necessary to prosecute; but this by no means implies that emergencies may not make it proper; but surely there is nothing so essential to the true check of sedition as impartiality in prosecution. If a government wishes to be respected, they must act with the strictest impartiality, and show that they are as determined to prevent the propaga-

tions of doctrines injurious to the rights of the people as of those which are hostile to the rights of the crown. If men are to be encouraged to rally round the one standard, you must not, you ought not to prevent volunteers from rallying round the other; unless you desire to stifle in the breasts of men the surest and most active principle of obedience, a belief in your impartiality.

When I first heard, Sir, that the militia were called out, I felt more anxiety and consternation than ever possessed my mind. I thought that information had certainly been received of some actual insurrection, or impending invasion. But when I heard that they were not called out to enable ministers to send the troops to any distant part, to Ireland, or to Scotland (where they might know of disturbances, though I did not), but that troops were assembling round London, I firmly believed the whole to be a fraud; for I have friends in and about London, as intelligent, as vigilant, as much interested in the tranquillity of the metropolis as the right honourable magistrate; and I was confident that an insurrection could not actually exist in London without being known. I pronounced it in my own mind to be a fraud, and I here again pronounce it to be so. I am not given to make light assertions in this House, nor do I desire to receive implicit belief. I deprecate confidence on my bare assertion. On the contrary, I state that I believe this pretext to be a fraud, and I entreat you to inquire, that you may ascertain the truth. I know that there are societies who have indulged themselves, as I think, in silly and frantic speculations, and who have published toasts, etc., that are objectionable; but that there is any insurrection, or that any attempt was making to overthrow the constitution, I deny. Now, if this assertion of ministers is a falsehood, is it an innocent falsehood? Are the people of this country playthings in the hands of ministers, that they may frighten them and disturb them at pleasure? Are they to treat them as some weak, jealous-pated and capricious men treat their wives and mistresses—alarm them with false stories, that they may cruelly feast on the torture of their apprehensions, and delight in the susceptibility that drowns them in tears! Have they no better enjoyment than to put forth false alarms, that they know may draw from the people the soothing expressions of agitated loyalty? Or do they think that these expressions, generously, readily made, in favour of the king, whom the people rationally love, may extend in its influence to all the persons that are near his throne?

Indulging in this passion, they may keep us incessantly in the tumult of apprehension, until at last they so habituate the mind to dread the evil in this quarter as to look for it in no other, or to stun it by repeated shocks of fiction into an insensibility of real attack.

His majesty, in the next passage of the speech, brings us to the apprehension of a war. I shall refrain at this time from saying all that occurs to me on this subject, because I wish to keep precisely to the immediate subject: but never, surely, had this country so much reason to wish for peace; never was a period so little favourable to a rupture with France, or with any other power. I am not ready to subscribe exactly to the idea of the noble lord, of the propriety of a resolution never to go to war unless we are attacked; but I wish that a motion was proposed by someone to express our disapprobation of entering upon any war if we can by any honourable means avoid it. Let no man be deterred by the dread of being in a minority. A minority saved this country from a war against Russia. And surely it is our duty, as it is our true policy, to exert every means to avert that greatest of national calamities. In the year 1789 we all must remember that Spain provoked this country by an insult which is a real aggression: we were all agreed on the necessity of the case, but did we go headlong to war? No; we determined with becoming fortitude on an armed negotiation. We did negotiate, and we avoided a war. But now we disdain to negotiate. Why? Because we have no minister at Paris. Why have we no minister there? Because France is a republic! And thus we are to pay with the blood and treasure of the people for a punctilio! If there are discontents in the kingdom, Sir, this is the way to inflame them. It is of no consequence to any people what is the form of the government with which they may have to treat. It is with the governors, whatever may be the form, that in common sense and policy they can have to do. Having no legitimate concern with the internal state of any independent people, the road of common sense is simple and direct. That of pride and punctilio is as entangled as it is crooked. Is the pretext the opening of the Scheldt? I cannot believe that such an object can be the real cause. I doubt even if a war on this pretext would be undertaken with the approbation of the Dutch. What was the conduct of the French themselves under their depraved old system, when the good of the people never entered into the contemplation of the cabinet? The emperor

threatened to open the Scheldt in 1786. Did the French go to war with him instantly to prevent it? No. They opened a negotiation, and prevented it by interfering with their good offices. Why have we not so interfered? Because, forsooth, France is an unanointed republic! Oh miserable, infatuated Frenchmen! Oh lame and inconsiderate politicians! Why, instead of breaking the holy vial of Rheims, why did you not pour some of the sacred oil on the heads of your executive council, that the pride of states might not be forced to plunge themselves and you into the horrors of war rather than be contaminated by your acquaintance! How short-sighted were you to believe that the prejudices of infants had departed with the gloom of ignorance, and that states were grown up to a state of manhood and reason!

This naturally brings us back again to the business of this day, namely, whether any address should be agreed to or not. I desire, then, to put it seriously to the conscience and honour of gentlemen to say whether they will not be aiding the object of republicans and levellers if they should agree to plunge this country headlong into a war, or give any pledge whatever to the crown, until they inquire and ascertain whether there is an insurrection in this country or not? Shall we declare war without inquiring whether we are also to have commotions at home? Shall we pledge our constituents to submission, to compliance, without first proving to them that the strong measure of government has been authorised by truth? If you would have the laws respected by the people, I say again, you must begin by showing that they are respected from above. If you do not prove to the people that there is an actual insurrection (for I leave out impending invasion and rebellion, as these are not even pretended), you cannot withhold from them the knowledge that you have acted illegally. And how can you expect rational obedience to the laws when you yourselves contradict them? When you set up the *ratio suasoria* as the *ratio justificata*, the people will clearly discern the futility and falsehood of your logic, and translate at once your terms into their true English of real causes and false pretexts. “*Ut ameris amabilis esto*” is as true in government and legislation as it is in manners and private life, and is as well established by experience. The people will not be cheated. They will look round, and demand where this danger is to be seen. Is it in England?—They see it overflowing in expressions of loyalty, and yet they libel it with imputations of insurrection. In Ireland, you know there

is danger, and dare not own it. There you have prorogued the parliament to the 15th instant, but not to meet till the end of January for the despatch of business, though you know that there a most respectable and formidable convention—I call it formidable because I know nothing so formidable as reason, truth and justice—will oblige you by the most cogent reasons to give way to demands which the magnanimity of the nation ought to have anticipated. There you have thus prorogued the parliament, and deprived yourselves of the means of doing that gracefully which you must do, and which you ought to have done long ago, to subjects as attached to their king, and as abundantly endowed with every manly virtue as any part of the united kingdom. And while the claims of generous and ill-treated millions are thus protracted, and, in addition to the hardship of their condition, they are insulted with the imprudent assertion of the tyrannical ascendancy, there is a miserable mockery held out of alarms in England which have no existence, but which are made the pretext of assembling the parliament in an extraordinary way, in order, in reality, to engage you in a foreign contest. What must be the fatal consequence when a well-judging people shall decide—what I sincerely believe—that the whole of this business is a ministerial manoeuvre? Will the ministers own the real truth, and say that they wanted a pretext to assemble parliament to make up for their want of vigilance? They must take their choice, and submit to incur the indignation of their country or feel themselves in a state of contempt. There are men who in this very act give them the praise of vigilance. They did all this, to be sure, with a little harmless fraud, to prevent evils! Let us examine their claim to vigilance.

This vigilant ministry saw, nay (if we may take their character from their associates) hoped, that France was on the brink of falling a sacrifice to the united force of Austria and Prussia, the two powers, of all others, whose union would be the most dreadful to England; but they saw no danger in this conquest to England, though thereby these great military powers were to become maritime. They saw no danger in the union concerted between them, nay, when they had given away Poland in the meantime, because, I suppose, they thought that when Oczakow was gone, the balance of Europe went with it, and they retreated out of the field with disgrace. They gave away Poland with as little compunction as honour, and with the unenviable certainty that their blustering was laughed at and despised in every court in

Europe. I know that some of them have inordinate self-complacency; yet I will not be so uncandid as to conceal my honest opinion that there is not among them a single man whose talents for great and commanding policy have either attracted or secured the confidence of any quarter of Europe. Do they boast of their vigilance? The dexterous surrender of Oczakow, as they now know, might have saved the fall and ruin of Poland. Do they boast of their vigilance? And had they no apprehension of the union between Austria and Prussia? Had they such perfect reliance on the moderation of Prussia, on his intimate friendship with, his gratitude to, his confidence in, our faithful cabinet? Do they boast of their vigilance, and yet saw nothing of their present dread for Holland and Brabant on the 30th of September, when to the joy of every man whose heart is warmed with the love of freedom, the Duke of Brunswick retreated before the armies of France? Were they vigilant not to foresee the consequences of that retreat; or did they flatter themselves with the weak, the false hope, that still the steadiness of men bred up in the trammels of tactics and discipline would be an overmatch for the impetuosity of men animated by the glorious flame of liberty? If so, the battle of Jemappe ought, I should think, to have shown these vigilant men their error. That battle happened on the 6th of November. On the same day the government of the Netherlands took to flight, and the news arrived in England on the 10th or 12th. Now, what did these vigilant ministers? On the 17th they prorogued the parliament to the 3rd of January, without even saying that it was then to meet for the despatch of business! And yet on these vigilant men we are to repose, although in the eyes of Europe, and in the hearts of Englishmen, an armament in their hands is a proof and earnest of their future humiliation!

They call for subsidiary aid from the loyalty of the people, and to procure this they have recourse to history, and search out for the lucky frauds of former times: they find one of the most lucky frauds was the popish plot in the reign of Charles the Second. The same cry in the present moment they knew was impossible; but a similar one was feasible in the enmity against a republic. The Protestant dissenters then, as now, were made the objects of terror, and every art was used to provoke the rage of ignorance and barbarity. The fraud was too successful. Many of my friends, from the best motives, were deluded into the snare, and that most calamitous of all measures, the proclamation, unfortunately for England, met

with their countenance. I cannot better describe this calamity than by reading a passage from an eminent historian, Ralph, on the fatal consequences of the delusion of the popish plot. By comparing my friends on the present occasion to the celebrated Lord Russell at that time, I think that I cannot pay a better compliment to them, or at the same time a more just and deserved tribute to the memory of that excellent person. Both, in consequence of their high integrity and attachment to the country, have become the dupes of deception. The passage is as follows: "But there were persons, it seems, ready to adopt his (Oates's) intelligence, imperfect, chimerical or fictitious as it was, and to make use of it as a firebrand to light up such a flame of dissension as had like to have laid waste the kingdom; and of these, according to the distinction already made, some were weak and some were wicked. The weak were those who thought popery the greatest mischief that comprehended all others, who mistook prejudice for conviction, credulity for candour, and rigour for righteousness. These, however, meant well, though they acted ill; and while doing the drudgery of a party, persuaded themselves they were saving the nation. The wicked were the master politicians of the times, who considered kings not as they were, good or ill in themselves, but as they were ill or good with respect to their own immediate views: now the plot, whether true or false, was formed of the happiest ingredients imaginable to advance their interest."

Now, Sir, let me address one word to my valued friends. I entreat them to reflect on the consequences of their recent delusion—not dissimilar to the above. The measure of the proclamation is now stated to be over—it has failed: let them avoid all further snares of the same kind. They will reflect on the necessity of union from the experience of the advantages which have flowed from it. They cannot feel more sensibly than I do the benefits of the cordial co-operation of that body of men who have, through the whole of the present reign, had to struggle with prejudice as well as enmity. Let them recollect the manner in which the present ministers came into power: let them recollect the insidious attempts that have been made to disjoin them; and now that the fatal measure of the proclamation is over, let them avoid, I say, all further snares of the same kind. Of the declarations, which it is now the fashion to sign, I certainly cannot in general approve. Of all that I have seen, that of the Merchants of London appears best calculated to conciliate the approbation of constitutional men;

but I see and hear on every side such violent doctrines, and such afflicting measures, as no man who is actuated by the wish of preserving peace in this country can subscribe to. A noble lord (Fielding), for whom I have a high respect, says he will move for a suspension of the habeas-corpus act. I hope not. I have a high respect for the noble lord; but no motive of personal respect shall make me inattentive to my duty. Come from whom it may, I will with my most determined powers oppose so dreadful a measure.

But, it may be asked, what would I propose to do in times of agitation like the present? I will answer openly. If there is a tendency in the dissenters to discontent, because they conceive themselves to be unjustly suspected, and cruelly calumniated, what would I do?—I would instantly repeal the test and corporation acts, and take from them, by such a step, all cause of complaint. If there were any persons tinctured with a republican spirit, because they thought that the representative government was more perfect in a republic, I would endeavour to amend the representation of the Commons, and to show that the House of Commons, though not chosen by all, should have no other interest than to prove itself the representative of all. If there were men dissatisfied in Scotland or Ireland, or elsewhere, on account of disabilities and exemptions, of unjust prejudices, and of cruel restrictions, I would repeal the penal statutes, which are a disgrace to our law books. If there were other complaints of grievances, I would redress them where they were really proved; but above all I would constantly, cheerfully, patiently listen. I would make it known that if any man felt, or thought he felt, a grievance, he might come freely to the bar of this House and bring his proofs: and it should be made manifest to all the world that where they did exist they would be redressed; where they did not, that it should be made evident. If I were to issue a proclamation, this should be my proclamation: “If any man has a grievance, let him bring it to the bar of the Commons’ House of Parliament with the firm persuasion of having it honestly investigated.” These are the subsidies that I would grant to government. What, instead of this, is done? Suppress the complaint—check the circulation of knowledge—command that no man shall read; or that as no man under £100 a year can kill a partridge, so no man under £20 or £30 a year shall dare to read or to think!

I see in Westminster the most extraordinary resolutions of parochial meetings. In that city, with which I am intimately



connected, and to which I owe high obligations, there have been resolutions and associations which militate against every idea that I was ever taught to entertain both of law and of the constitution. In the parish of St. Anne, Soho, at the head of which parochial meeting I see a much-respected friend of mine, Sir Joseph Banks, they have demanded a register of all the strangers living in the parish. In St. Clement's and elsewhere publicans are threatened with the loss of their licences if they shall suffer any newspapers to be read in their houses that they shall think seditious. Good God! where did justices find this law? I have always thought that there was no one thing of which the law was more justly jealous than the exercise of the discretionary power given to justices with regard to licences, and that above all things it was not permitted them to suffer political motives to interfere in the giving or withholding them. And publicans, too, are to be made judges of libel! No newspaper or pamphlet is to be read but such as they shall determine to be free from sedition! No conversation is to be suffered but what they shall judge to be loyal! And yet in this very House, not more than a twelvemonth ago, when I brought in a bill with regard to libels, we all heard it asserted that the knowledge of what was a libel could not be safely left to the determination of twelve jurymen—it could be judged of only by sages in the law. How can these publicans be conceived capable of judging, or by what rule are they to act? Are they to take their opinions from these associations? They recommend to them that loyal paper called *One Pennyworth of Advice*, in which, among other things, it is pretty plainly insinuated that it would have been well if Petion, the late mayor of Paris, had been assassinated when in England, and that it would be an excess of virtue to exterminate the dissenters! Are they to be told that such writings as these are perfectly harmless and praiseworthy, but that discussions on the constitution, debating societies (although, by-the-bye, I never knew London without debating societies, and I cannot see by what law any magistrate can interrupt their peaceable discussions), and all papers and conversations, where there are free opinions on the nature of government, are libellous? What, Sir, must be the consequence of all this, but that these publicans must decide that that is libellous which is disapproved of by ministers for the time being and by these associations, and that all freedom of opinion and all the fair and impartial freedom of the press is utterly destroyed!

Sir, I love the constitution as it is established. It has grown

up with me as a prejudice and a habit, as well as from conviction. I know that it is calculated for the happiness of man, and that its constituent branches of king, lords and commons could not be altered or impaired without entailing on this country the most dreadful miseries. It is the best adapted to England, because, as the noble earl truly said, the people of England think it the best; and the safest course is to consult the judgment and gratify the predilections of a country. Heartily convinced, however, as I am, that to secure the peace, strength and happiness of the country we must maintain the constitution against all innovation, yet I do not think so superstitiously of any human institution as to imagine that it is incapable of being perverted: on the contrary, I believe that it requires an increasing vigilance on the part of the people to prevent the decay and dilapidations to which every edifice is subject. I think, also, that we may be led asleep to our real danger by these perpetual alarms to loyalty, which, in my opinion, are daily sapping the constitution. Under the pretext of guarding it from the assaults of republicans and levellers, we run the hazard of leaving it open on the other and more feeble side. We are led insensibly to the opposite danger; that of increasing the power of the crown, and of degrading the influence of the Commons' House of Parliament. It is in such moments as the present that the most dangerous, because unsuspected, attacks may be made on our dearest rights; for let us only look back to the whole course of the present administration, and we shall see that, from their outset to the present day, it has been their invariable object to degrade the House of Commons in the eyes of the people, and to diminish its power and influence in every possible way.

It was not merely in the outset of their career, when they stood up against the declared voice of the House of Commons, that this spirit was manifested, but uniformly and progressively throughout their whole ministry the same disposition has been shown, until at last it came to its full, undisguised demonstration on the question of the Russian war, when the House of Commons was degraded to the lowest state of insignificance and contempt, in being made to retract its own words, and to acknowledge that it was of no consequence or avail what were its sentiments on any one measure. The minister has regularly acted upon this sort of principle: "I do not care what the House of Commons may think, or what may be thought of them. It is not their verdict that is to acquit me in any moment of difficulty or any

hour of trial. I will agitate the people without: I will see whether they will bear me up in my measures; and as for the House of Commons, if, in the height of their confidence in me, they shall be made to say one thing to-day, I will make them, with equal ease, and without regard to their character, say another to-morrow." Such is the true English of the principle of the right honourable gentleman's conduct, and this principle he has constantly acted upon, to the vilification of the popular branch of the constitution. And what is this, Sir, but to make it appear that the House of Commons is in reality what Thomas Paine and writers like him say it is, namely that it is not the true representative and organ of the people? In the same way, and by the same language, might Thomas Paine bring a slander upon our courts of law, and upon the trial by jury. In the same tone he might assert: "Do not tell me what a jury of twelve men may say of my book: do not tell me what these associations say: I reject all tribunals, either constituted by legal authority or self-erected: give me the people for my judges, and I will prove that my doctrines are agreeable to them." Such language would square completely with that of ministers, and constantly have they resorted to the dangerous innovation of supporting themselves, without regard to the opinion of the House of Commons, by appeals one day to the crown, the next to the lords, and the third to the people, uniformly striving to exhibit parliament in the disgraceful and pitiful light of complete incapacity. Is it not wonderful, Sir, that all the true constitutional watchfulness of England should be dead to the only real danger that the present day exhibits, and that they should be alone roused by the idiotic clamour of republican frenzy and of popular insurrection which do not exist?

Sir, I have done my duty. I have, with the certainty of opposing myself to the furor of the day, delivered my opinion at more length than I intended, and perhaps I have intruded too long on the indulgence of the House. [A general cry of "Hear him!" bespoke the perfect attention of the House.] I have endeavoured to persuade you against the indecent haste of committing yourselves to these assertions of an existing insurrection until you shall have made a rigorous inquiry where it is to be found. To avoid involving the people in the calamity of a war, without at least ascertaining the internal state of the kingdom, and to prevent us from falling into the disgrace of being, as heretofore, obliged perhaps in a week to retract every

syllable that we are now called upon to say: to carry this into effect I shall move that after the first sentence of the proposed motion, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, humbly to thank his majesty for his most gracious speech from the throne," the following words be substituted in the room of all that follow in the original motion:

"To express to his majesty our most zealous attachment to the excellent constitution of this free country, our sense of the invaluable blessings which we derive from it, and our unshaken determination to maintain and preserve it.

"To assure his majesty that, uniting with all his majesty's faithful subjects in these sentiments of loyalty to the throne, and attachment to the constitution, we feel in common with them the deepest anxiety and concern when we see those measures adopted by the executive government which the law authorises only in cases of insurrection within this realm.

"That his majesty's faithful Commons, assembled in a manner new and alarming to the country, think it their first duty, and will make it their first business, to inform themselves of the causes of this measure, being equally zealous to enforce a due obedience to the laws on the one hand, and a faithful execution of them on the other."

Mr. Fox's amendment was opposed by Mr. Windham, Mr. Secretary Dundas, Mr. Burke, Mr. Anstruther, the Attorney-General Sir John Scott, and the Solicitor-General Sir John Mitford. It was supported by Mr. Grey, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Thomas Grenville and Mr. Erskine.—Mr. Grey said he did not believe the minds of the people of this country to be so perverse as to be disaffected with a constitution from which they enjoyed so many blessings. Their natural good sense, he was convinced, would prevent them from adopting any doctrines subversive of that constitution. He was not a friend to Paine's doctrines, but he was not to be deterred by a name from acknowledging that he considered the rights of man as the foundation of every government, and those who stood out against those rights as conspirators against the people. He concluded with comparing, as Mr. Fox had done, the delusions of the popish plot in the reign of Charles the Second to the impressions produced by those alarms, which ministers had taken so much pains to excite.—Mr. Sheridan contended that if there were, in reality, any seditious persons in this country, who wished to overturn the constitution, their numbers were as small as their designs were detestable. Ministers themselves had created the alarm; and it was the duty of that House, before they should proceed farther, to go into an inquiry respecting the circumstances which were alleged as the ground of that alarm. Ought they to rely upon the information of ministers, or act in consequence of that

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information, when there was reason to think that they themselves had forged the plot? He hoped it was not understood that those who rejoiced in the revolution in France approved likewise of all the subsequent excesses. The formidable band of republicans who had been mentioned to exist in this country Mr. Sheridan represented as nothing more than men in buckram. So far from its being the wish of any description of men that a French army should be introduced into this country, it was his opinion that were one French soldier to land upon our coast, with the idea of effecting any change in our government, every hand and heart in the country would be fired by the indignity, and unite to oppose so insulting an attempt. As to the question of a war, he should vote that English minister to be impeached who should enter into a war for the purpose of re-establishing the former despotism in France, who should dare in such a cause to spend one guinea, or spill one drop of blood. A war in the present moment, he considered, ought only to be undertaken on the ground of the most inevitable necessity.—Mr. Erskine justified himself as a member of the society for reform, and blamed the conduct of ministers for their delay in prosecuting the author of the *Rights of Man* till a year and a half after its publication. He concluded with recommending the House to govern the people by their affections, and instead of loading them with abuse and culumny, to meet their complaints, to redress their grievances, and, by granting them a fair representation, to remove the ground of their dissatisfaction.

The House then divided on the address moved by the Lord Mayor: Yeas, 290; Noes, 50.

The following is a list of the minority who voted with Mr. Fox upon this occasion:

Right Hon. C. J. Fox	Hon. Richard Bingham
Charles Grey, Esq.	J. N. Edwards, Esq.
Rich. Brinsley Sheridan, Esq.	Lee Anthony, Esq.
Rt. Hon. Lord G. A. H. Cavendish	William Adam, Esq.
Lord Edward Bentinck	William Plumer, Esq.
Lord John Russell	Henry Howard, Esq.
Lord William Russell	Right Hon. Lord Robt. Spencer
Earl of Wycombe	Philip Francis, Esq.
Viscount Milton	James Martin, Esq.
Hon. T. Erskine	William Smith, Esq.
Hon. Lionel Damer	Thomas Thompson, Esq.
Hon. T. Maitland	B. Tarleton, Esq.
George Byng, Esq.	Hon. St. Andrew St. John
William Hussey, Esq.	Charles Sturt, Esq.
John Crewe, Esq.	Benjamin Vaughan, Esq.
William Baker, Esq.	Cunliff Shaw, Esq.
Dudley North, Esq.	R. S. Milnes, Esq.
John Courtenay, Esq.	Edward Bouvier, Esq.
John Shaw Stuart, Esq.	Thomas Grenville, Esq.
Sir Henry Fletcher, Bart.	Roger Wilbraham, Esq.
John Wharton, Esq.	Sir John Aubrey, Bart.
Right Hon. R. Fitzpatrick	Sir John Jervis, K.B.

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Samuel Whitbread, Esq.  
Norman Macleod, Esq.  
Joseph Jekyll, Esq.  
Thomas Whitmore, Esq.

J. R. Burch, Esq.  
John Harcourt, Esq.  
M. A. Taylor, Esq.  
W. H. Lambton, Esq. } Tellers

*December 14, 1792.*

The Lord Mayor brought up the report of the address agreed upon last night. The said address being read a second time.

Mr. Fox said that as this was in some measure a continuation of a former debate, he should take the opportunity to reply to several arguments that had been urged against him. Some gentlemen had blamed him for having proposed an amendment to the address when unanimity of sentiment was so much to be desired; but he had acted according to his feelings, and others had sacrificed their feelings to unanimity. Those who had thus censured him had censured ministers for being neutral respecting France; and he censured them for the same neutrality, though from very different motives. So far was he from thinking that ministers deserved praise in that respect, that he thought the House of Commons ought to impeach them. His opinion was, that from the moment they knew a league was formed against France, this country ought to have interfered: France had justice completely on her side, and we, by a prudent negotiation with the other powers, might have prevented the horrid scenes which were afterwards exhibited, and saved, too, the necessity of being reduced to our present situation. We should by this have held out to Europe a lesson of moderation, of justice and of dignity, worthy of a great empire; this was his opinion with respect to the conduct which ought to have been adopted, but it was what ministers had neglected. There was one general advantage, however, resulting from this; it taught the proudest men in this world that there was an energy in the cause of justice which, when once supported, nothing could defeat. Thank God, nature had been true to herself; tyranny had been defeated, and those who had fought for freedom were triumphant!

Indeed, all those who spoke in support of ministers in the debate of last night had insisted that France had formed views of aggrandisement and general dominion. If so, why thank the king's ministers for their neutrality when, if they are right now, upon their own principle, they should have formerly interfered to have checked their career? He insisted that it was impossible, without an abandonment of all consistency, to approve of the present address. Whoever conceived him to be of opinion that

the aggrandisement of France was matter of indifference to this country mistook him grossly. France certainly had aggrandised herself. She had disappointed the predictions of that gentleman who, during the last session, in speaking of the opponents of Great Britain on the continent, had exclaimed, "There is no danger from any quarter! looking into the map of Europe, I see a chasm once called France." That chasm, however, the gentleman must now confess, was filled. No longer would he be able to speak of the inhabitants of that nation as having once been famous—*Gallos olim bello floruisse*. They had conducted themselves in such a manner as to induce him to be of opinion that the power of France might be formidable to this country. She was formidable under her monarchy, when in alliance with Spain and in friendship with Austria. But France, with finances almost ruined—France, at enmity with Austria and certainly not in amity with Spain, was much more formidable now: she was formidable now from her freedom, the animating effects of which were beyond the calculation of man. All the inhabitants of Europe, who felt anything in the cause of freedom, sympathised with the French and wished them success, regarding them as men struggling with tyrants and despots, while they were endeavouring to form for themselves a free government. But perhaps he should be told that France had not a free government. In order to shorten that question for the present he would say, in the words of a certain author, that "a free government for all practical purposes is that which the people consider as such"; so it was with the French during the whole of the last campaign: they had been successful on account of the nature of their cause. Courage and all the bolder virtues naturally attended freedom. Let us not foolishly continue the absurd prejudice that none but Englishmen deserve to be free. Liberty had no attachment to soil; it was the inheritance of man over every part of the globe, and wherever enjoyed it always produced the same effects.

With these sentiments, he could not but be of opinion that the conduct of Great Britain ought to be peculiarly prudent, and above all, strictly just: she ought immediately to acknowledge the government of France, and to adopt all honourable means of procuring peace: she ought to weigh all the consequences of a war, to view with a scrutinising eye the nature and extent of her resources at home, and to ascertain the degree of assistance which she might expect from her allies: she should most certainly consider well the situation of Ireland. Much had it surprised him last night that a gentleman, who from his situation

ought to be something of a statesman, had asserted that the state of Ireland ought not to be alluded to. What! was not the condition of Ireland to be considered in a question that implicated a war? Indeed it ought to be, and seriously and solemnly too. It ought to be considered that in that country there were millions of persons in a state of complete disfranchisement, and very little elevated above slaves. Would any man in his senses suppose that hearty support could be expected from that kingdom in the event of a war? Indeed, indeed, the blood and treasure of this country ought not to be lightly risked. The time was come when ministers would not perhaps think it prudent to go to war on the mere prerogative of the crown; they would think the approbation of parliament and of the people necessary, indispensably necessary; but it remained with the House to consider whether a war ought to be entered into at all; and if so, whether it ought to be conducted by those who composed the present administration? It ought to be considered also how small would be the effect which they were capable of producing in the courts of Europe. What court, he would ask, would be elevated by their promises, or intimidated by their menaces, after their conduct with regard to Russia? It should be considered likewise that it was doubtful whether our allies would rely on us, or whether we could rely on them. The retreat of the Duke of Brunswick he did not believe depended on us, but was such a consequence as the poet had described:

Ask why from Britain Cæsar made retreat,  
Cæsar might make reply that he was beat.

On Prussia, in spite of the near connection that subsisted, he did not think that this country could entirely depend, for domestic occurrences in that kingdom might render it unable to afford us much assistance. On the emperor no reliance was to be placed at all.

Having thus stated some reasons flowing out of the situation of the allies of Great Britain and of Ireland, he begged to advert to some other circumstances. The cause of a war, at least the apparent one, would be the invasion of Holland by the French. In Holland, it ought to be remembered that there were persons disaffected to the Stadtholderian government who possessed no small degree of power. These persons could not certainly be expected to approve of the war. But much reliance had been placed on Amsterdam. The aristocratic principles of that city would, it was said, be in unison with the war, and the opening of



the Scheldt would procure from Amsterdam efficacious support to Great Britain. To those who used this argument he begged leave to suggest the case of Brabant. The clergy of Brabant, who had the ear of the people, were supposed, with reason, to be inimical to the progress of the French arms, which would most probably curtail their immense possessions. This aristocracy of the clergy, however, was of no avail; for as soon as the French approached, the people of Brabant received them with open arms. If such effects had been produced in that country, might not the same be produced in Amsterdam?

But now the question came, How were the calamities of war to be avoided in this case? He would answer—By negotiation. Open a negotiation with the republic of France, and try every step that can be taken before you expose your country to the horrors of war. This, he said, was the duty of government. With the minister, perhaps, the season of negotiation might be past; but it was not past with the House of Commons, which ought not to be implicated in the crime. If he were asked when the minister ought to have negotiated, he would inform him. He should have negotiated to prevent the invasion of the Duke of Brunswick. Perhaps he did nothing. This, however, he was certain that he did: he prorogued the parliament; he appeared careless about the conquest of Brabant and Flanders, which were, in a manner, the gates of Holland; and he seemed to have reasoned thus: “The town I will defend, but anybody may possess the gates who please.” Perhaps, indeed, the ambassador from the republic of France would not be fine enough in his appearance to figure in our drawing-room, and, therefore, we must not endure the thought of a negotiation. If that was the case, ministers should say so, in order that the good people of England might know the important reason why their blood must be spilt and their treasure squandered. If so, “the age of chivalry” was revived with a vengeance; but he trusted that some more substantial reason would be given for going to war, and that whenever we did go to war, the minister would have to say to the public, We have tried the effect of a negotiation and pacific expressions, but to no purpose: then they might expect a general concurrence, but until then they would certainly be inexcusable in proceeding to hostilities.

Alluding to Mr. Burke's speech last night, he declared that he did not think he had been treated with civility by that right honourable gentleman. It had been said by that gentleman that he had advanced facts which he did not believe; now, he had

thought that his right honourable friend knew him too well to suppose that he ever asserted what he did not believe. In fact, he had last night declared that he would not make assertions with respect to particular cases, from an apprehension that those cases might not be founded in truth. The reasoning his right honourable friend had adopted on account of this delicacy was perfectly novel. He had also been accused by him of using more of invective than argument. On this head he was perfectly sure that he had not carried his invective farther than the right honourable gentleman, who could not forget that he had been obliged to descend to hell for similes and figures of speech with which to stigmatise the governors of the French nation. Among some exceptionable characters, he had classed and reprobated M. Roland, a man, as he believed, eminent for many virtues. How far such invective tended to conciliate France it required little deliberation to determine. Could his right honourable friend suppose that such gross insults and injuries would be forgotten or forgiven by persons of spirit and capacity? The peevishness which disgraced their discussions when they were talking of the concerns of France would irritate, but could never reconcile.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to enforce the propriety of negotiation. So well convinced was he that every hour we delayed this negotiation was a loss to us, that he would move to-morrow an address to his majesty to treat with the executive government of France. This he should do with more conviction of its propriety than hope of its success; that consideration should not slacken his efforts: all the world would acknowledge the propriety of it by and bye, although so many affected to despise it now. He had been the first to throw off the prejudice which was once so general in this country against the infant freedom, and afterwards independence, of America. Gentlemen should recollect that though it was once fashionable to talk of "a vagrant congress," of "one Adams," of "Hancock and his crew," England had, in the end, been obliged to acknowledge the sovereignty and independence of America. The same thing might happen with respect to the French republic, and it would be better that we should send a minister to France immediately on the meeting of parliament than perhaps after that event should have taken place, which he most earnestly deprecated, and should most heartily deplore. He was old enough to remember the names of Washington and Adams, those two great and noble pillars of republicanism, loaded with abuse. He was old

enough to remember when their remonstrance on behalf of the American States was treated with contempt. Dr. Franklin was, on that occasion, abused without mercy by a learned gentleman; and yet shortly after all this contempt these two gentlemen contributed to the forming for the people who enjoyed it the first constitution in the world—for them most certainly the best form of government upon earth, for such he would venture to say was the government of America. Shortly after this he, as secretary of state, sent over to America to treat with this very Dr. Franklin on behalf of this country; this he must have done with an ill grace if he had joined in the abuse of that gentleman, and therefore he did not wish to be forward in shewing his contempt. In short, the republic of France was that which we must acknowledge sooner or later; and where was the difficulty of acknowledging it now? Was not the republic of this country readily acknowledged at the time of Cromwell? Did not courts vie in their civilities to our new form of government after the execution of Charles the First?—an execution, whatever difference of opinion might be entertained about it, which had infinitely less injustice in it than that which, he feared, was about to be inflicted on the late unhappy monarch of France; but he hoped a deed so foul would not be committed.

His right honourable friend had said yesterday, What, are we to receive an ambassador reeking with the blood of innocent men, and perhaps even of the king of France? Mr. Fox said his answer to this was that should the French proceed to extremities against that unfortunate monarch, he should consider it as an act that would be for ever a disgrace to their nation, and which every man must deplore; but still he could not think that we were therefore never to have any connection with France. He wished that if their objection to receive one at present was that they did not know how to introduce a French minister into the king's drawing-room, that they would fairly avow it, to the end that the people of England might see that their blood and treasure were to be sacrificed to a mere punctilio.

After pathetically lamenting the fate of that unhappy family, he returned to the affairs of France as they were likely to affect this country. We wanted to check the aggrandisement of France: perhaps not to go to war with them was to check their aggrandisement, for their cause upon the continent was popular. They said “that all governments were their foes.” This was but too true, and had been of popular service to them; but that which served them most of all was the detestation which all Europe had enter-

tained for the principles of the leaders of the combined armies. They had neither honour nor humanity. When the brave but unfortunate La Fayette, by the pressure of irresistible circumstances, fell into their possession—instead of receiving him as a gentleman, with the dignity that was due to his distress, they seized him with fury, locked him up like a felon, and cruelly continued to keep him in custody, in defiance of the wishes and compassion of us all, and in a manner that must provoke the indignation of every virtuous man in Europe. But this gentleman had always been a friend to liberty, and that was enough to excite their hatred. Mr. Fox concluded with moving an amendment to the address by inserting these words: “Trusting that your majesty will employ every means of negotiation, consistent with the honour and safety of this country, to avert the calamities of war.”

The amendment was opposed by Mr. Burke, Mr. Yorke, Lord Carysfort, Mr. Secretary Dundas, Mr. Powys and Mr. Wilberforce; and supported by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Adam. It was negatived without a division; after which the report of the address was agreed to by the House.

MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR SENDING A MINISTER TO  
PARIS, TO TREAT WITH THE PROVISIONAL  
GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE

*December 15, 1792.*

THIS day, as soon as the House had returned from presenting their address to his majesty,

Mr. Fox rose to make his promised motion. After having already said so much on this subject, and feeling how little anything he could add was likely to be attended to in the present disposition of the House, he should only offer a very few words in the way of previous explanation; indeed, from the indisposition he laboured under, it was physically impossible for him to speak above a few minutes. By his motion he did not mean to imply any approbation of the conduct of the existing French government, or of the proceedings that had led to the present state of things in France. His object was simply to declare and record his opinion, that it was the true policy of every nation to treat with the existing government of every other nation with which it had relative interests, without inquiring or regarding how that government was constituted, or by what means those who exercised it came into power. This was not only the policy, but frequently the practice. If we objected to the existing form of government in France, we had as strong objections to the form of government at Algiers; yet at Algiers we had a consul. If we abhorred the crimes committed in France, we equally abhorred the crimes committed in Morocco; yet to the court of Morocco we had sent a consul almost immediately after the commission of crimes at which humanity shuddered. By these acts we were neither supposed to approve of the form of government at Algiers, nor of the crimes committed in Morocco. From his motion, therefore, no opinion was to be implied but the opinion he had stated.

It would have been better if what he proposed had been done sooner, and there were circumstances that made it less proper now than at an earlier period. But this was not imputable to him. The earliest period was now the best; and this was the

earliest opportunity that the meeting of parliament afforded him. It would have been still better if our minister had not been recalled from Paris, but had continued there as the ministers of some other courts had done. He concluded with moving, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that his majesty will be graciously pleased to give direction that a minister may be sent to Paris to treat with those persons who exercise provisionally the functions of executive government in France, touching such points as may be in discussion between his majesty and his allies and the French nation."

Mr. Fox's motion was seconded by Mr. Grey. It was opposed by Lord Sheffield, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Loveden, Mr. Frederick North, Mr. Jenkinson, the Master of the Rolls, Mr. Windham, Mr. Grant, Sir William Young, Mr. Burke, Sir James Murray, and Mr. Drake; and supported by Mr. M. A. Taylor, Mr. Grey, Colonel Tarleton, Mr. Francis, Mr. Erskine, Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Courtenay, and Mr. Sheridan.—Mr. Windham acknowledged that when any measure proceeded from Mr. Fox it was not without the greatest anxiety that he refused his assent to it. What the judgment of his right honourable friend was everyone knew; how pure his motives, how eminent his integrity, it would be as impertinent in him to explain as it would be in anyone to waste the time of the House in discussing positions that were acknowledged by all mankind. However wide, therefore, the difference that subsisted between his right honourable friend and himself, he was persuaded that it was only that species of difference which existed between two persons beholding the same object from two distinct points of view. He was persuaded that it was not a difference that extended to principle.—Mr. Grey supported the motion with great energy. "It was asked," he said, "if Great Britain was to sneak and crouch to France. No, neither sneak nor crouch, but negotiate like a great and high-spirited nation, and if redress was refused of any injury offered, then declare war. We are asked again, would we treat now under all the circumstances we know to be existing? I say, yes, certainly; for though I admit that the time is not the most favourable, the fault is not with us, but with ministers, who let the favourable opportunity pass away, and by their supine neglect lost an occasion of preventing many of the crimes committed in France, and perhaps of averting that act of injustice which we fear is at this moment committing. We are told by a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke) that to treat with men stained with so many crimes as the present rulers of France would be disgraceful; but if a war the most dangerous ever undertaken is to be avoided, we must treat now, and therefore it is that I support the motion as the only means left of averting so great a calamity. If (continued Mr. Grey) the enthusiasm of any man for my right honourable friend who made the motion be abated, mine, on the contrary, is if possible increased. The state of the country calls upon my honourable friend to stand in the gap and defend the constitution: he has said he will do so; and while I have power of

body or mind he shall not stand alone. A firm band of admiring friends, not the less respectable nor the less likely to prevail from the present disproportion of their number, will faithfully stand by him against all the calumnies of those who betray while they affect to defend the constitution."—Mr. Erskine also passed a spirited eulogium on Mr. Fox, whom he described as formed by Providence to guard, to invigorate, to save from ruin our constitution, and to remedy the vices of the times.—Mr. Whitbread said he had been accused of being an enemy to the constitution; but he was calumniated. He loved the monarchy, he loved the aristocracy, above all he loved the democracy of this country; but he had no attachment to the abuses existing in any department whatever. This, he was persuaded, was the sentiment of every man with whom he acted; and while his right honourable friend and leader, with his transcendent abilities, and others whom he esteemed and loved, stood in the gap between obstinacy and prejudice on the one hand and unprincipled licentiousness on the other, he would stand by them, and fight by them without fear or dread. While his right honourable friend was the leader, *de republica non desperandum!*—Mr. Courtenay declared that his sentiments on the present state of affairs exactly corresponded with those of Mr. Fox. "While I live and breathe," said he, "I will maintain these opinions. I know the public and private virtues of my right honourable friend; and whenever I separate from him I shall consider that day the most degraded of my life."—In reply to what fell from Mr. Secretary Dundas,

Mr. Fox, with a hoarseness so severe as to make it very difficult for him to speak at all, said it was physically impossible for him to say much, nor did he intend it. If I had thought, continued he, the circumstances such as the case stated by the right honourable secretary, I would not have made my motion; but from his majesty's speech and the address of the House in answer to it, I was authorised to think otherwise. Would the right honourable secretary in any case recall our ambassador, and order the French ambassador to leave this country, before he had actually determined on war? I think he would not: and that war is not yet determined on appears from this, that his majesty has assured us from the throne that nothing will be neglected by him that can contribute to the important object of preserving the blessings of peace; and for this assurance we have returned thanks in our address. If I sent an ambassador to France, I would not instruct him to petition, as some gentlemen have been pleased to suppose, but to demand satisfaction; and if that were denied, to return. The chief point maintained by me in making this motion is, not that the people are always to be consulted on the expediency of going to war, but that on all occasions they ought to be truly informed

what the object of the war is. If my motion is not adopted, and war should ensue, I fear there will be much doubt about what is the true cause, and that some will think we are fighting for one object, and some for another. The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke) who has taken so warm a part in this debate, asserts peremptorily that we are at war: and yet he voted for the address, thanking his majesty for his endeavours to preserve the blessings of peace. He directly contradicts both the ministers and the speech from the throne. They praise his eloquence in their support, but take care not to adopt his opinions. Whenever you do treat, and that you must treat some time or other nobody can deny, you must treat with the existing powers, and if you refuse to do that now which you know must be done at some time or other, you give away the opportunity of saving Holland from a war, of preserving to her the monopoly of the Scheldt without a war, and of obtaining the revocation of that resolution of the executive council of which I perhaps think as ill as you do. If the point in dispute be whether we shall negotiate by a minister or by means of secretaries communicating with ministers, I do not think that a sufficient cause of war. I have done my duty in submitting my ideas to the House, and in doing this I cannot possibly have had any other motives than those of public duty. What were my motives? Not to court the favour of ministers, or those by whom ministers are supposed to be favoured; not to gratify my friends, as the debates in this House have shown; not to court popularity, for the general conversation, both within and without these walls, has shown that to gain popularity I must have held the opposite course. The people may treat my house as they have done that of Dr. Priestley—as it is said they have more recently done that of Mr. Walker. My motive only was that they might know what was the real cause of the war into which they are likely to be plunged, and that they might know that it depended on a matter of mere form and ceremony.

The motion was negatived without a division. Mr. Pitt was not present during the important debates of the 13th, 14th, and 15th of December, having not yet been re-elected since his acceptance of the office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, vacant by the death of the Earl of Gainsford.



## SITUATION OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF FRANCE

*December 20, 1792.*

ON the report of the committee of supply, granting 25,000 seamen, including 5000 marines, for the service of the year 1793, Mr. Sheridan took occasion to say that he was convinced, notwithstanding the gross and indiscriminate abuse thrown out against every human creature bearing the name of Frenchman, that there existed in that country a sincere disposition to listen to and respect the opinion of the British nation. He alluded to the melancholy situation of their king now on his trial, and of his family. He was confident that the French nation was ill-informed of the temper and feelings of the free, generous and humane people of Great Britain, and that if they could be in any authentic manner apprised of what he in his soul and conscience believed to be the genuine impression of the public mind on this subject, namely, that there was not one man of any description or party who did not deprecate, and who would not deplore, the fate of those persecuted and unfortunate victims, should the apprehended catastrophe take place, he was confident that such a conviction might produce a considerable influence, he wished he could venture to say a successful effect, on the public mind in Paris, and throughout France. Mr. Sheridan pressed shortly his reasons for thinking thus, and said that among those whose hearts would be most revolted and disgusted by the unjust and inhuman act of cruelty he alluded to, he believed would be found all those who had been foremost in rejoicing at the destruction of the old despotism of France, and who had eagerly hoped and expected that to whatever extremes as to principles of government a momentary enthusiasm might lead a people new to the light of liberty; that however wild their theories might be, yet there would have appeared in the quiet, deliberate acts of their conduct those inseparable characteristics of real liberty and of true valour—justice, magnanimity, and mercy. He would not take upon him to give any opinion as to the manner in which the public sentiment of England might be expressed on this subject, but he was more and more convinced, from the latest intelligence from France, that the opportunity ought not to be neglected.—Mr. Burke said that he could not rely on the justice, the magnanimity, or the mercy of the French, particularly when they charged their king as a criminal for offences for which that House would not call the meanest individual in the country to their bar to answer. The truth was, the king was in the custody of assassins, who were both his accusers and his judges, and his destruction was inevitable.

Mr. Fox said he wished not to make any comment on the sentiments of others upon this subject; what he was most

solicitous about was the making clearly understood his own. I beg leave to say (continued he) that what has fallen from my honourable friend, and what he has been pleased to apply the words magnanimity, justice and mercy to, had no reference whatever to the proceedings on an impending event which all of us deprecate, and which every honest heart in Europe wishes to avert; I mean the unhappy situation of the royal family of France, on which, although the subject is not specifically before us, I wish to say a few, and but a few words. And first, I beg leave to declare that the proceedings on that awful event are so far from bearing the stamp of magnanimity, justice or mercy that they are directly the reverse, that they are injustice, cruelty and pusillanimity. This sentiment will, I hope, before it be too late, gain ground in France, for I have reason to believe that there is in that country a disposition to attend to the opinions and sentiments entertained here; and I rejoice to learn, from every testimony I can gather, that it is the unanimous sense of this House and of this country that the manner in which the unhappy royal family of France are treated is, as I have before described, founded in injustice, cruelty and pusillanimity. I own this subject has made a deep impression upon my mind, and it has just occurred to me (perhaps a better method may be easily devised, but it has occurred to me) that this House should address his majesty for a gracious communication\* of the words, or the substance, of his majesty's directions to Lord Gower, in consequence of which his lordship left Paris. Then I would propose an address of thanks to his majesty for his gracious communication; after which I would add an expression of our abhorrence of the proceedings against the royal family of France, in which, I have no doubt, we should be supported by the whole country.

If there can be any means suggested that will be better adapted to produce the unanimous concurrence of this House and of the country with respect to the measure now under consideration in Paris, I should be obliged to any person for his better suggestion upon the subject. For although I by no means stand up either for the justice, the magnanimity, or the mercy of those persons who are conducting the trial of the King of France, yet I cannot help thinking that an unanimous address of the House of Commons and, as I have no reason to doubt would be the case, of the House of Lords, expressing their abhorrence, and that of the country in general, of such proceedings, would have a decisive influence with persons of

all descriptions in France. I do not profess to be in their secrets, and I trust that the means I have of knowing something of the general state of that country, from conversations with gentlemen recently returned from thence, will not be misconstrued into any knowledge of, or participation whatever in, their intentions. I have said thus much in order to contradict one of the most cruel misrepresentations of what I before said in our late debates; and that my language may not be interpreted from the manner in which other gentlemen may have chosen to answer it. I have spoken the genuine sentiments of my heart, and I anxiously entreat the House to come to some resolution upon the subject.

With respect to the augmentation of the navy, Mr. Fox said, the minister had his entire support. He voted with all his heart for the 25,000 men; he should have given an equal concurrence to the number had it been 40,000. He should not move for that number, because his majesty's ministers knew, or had good reason to believe, that there might not be need for more at present. He thought it necessary to say that he did not view the progress of the French with indifference. At their progress he was alarmed. He voted cordially for the armament, and would vote for a greater if a greater was proposed. But the House knew that if the present armament were found insufficient for the exigency of affairs, it was perfectly competent to increase it hereafter. Here Mr. Fox observed that the three different views of the subject rendered an armament equally necessary: first, if we went to war; secondly, if we did not go to war; and in the third case, which he confessed he did not understand, if the right honourable gentleman were to do neither the one nor the other. If we went to war the necessity of an armament was obvious. If we negotiated, which he confessed he strongly recommended, we must be armed, in order to enforce our demand of satisfaction, and secure success to our negotiations. He had great hopes, however, that war would still be avoided, because the king's speech gave assurances to that effect. But if the necessity of affairs should require an increase of the armament now voted, he begged it to be understood that his majesty's ministers, as far as that went, had not a warmer supporter than himself.

Mr. Pitt moved that an address be presented to his majesty, praying him to direct that there be laid before this House a copy or extract of the instructions sent to Earl Gower, his majesty's ambassador to the Most Christian King, signifying his majesty's

pleasure that he should quit Paris. The motion was agreed to, and the paper being presented on the following day, Mr. Pitt moved that it should lie on the table to be perused by the members of the House.

Mr. Fox wished in a few words to express his concurrence with the proposal of the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer. His opinion upon this subject, he believed, was the opinion of the whole House and the whole country. It was better that we should proceed no further than that we should engage ourselves too deeply. He had heard it said that the proceedings against the unhappy King of France were unnecessary. He would go a great deal further, and say he believed them to be highly unjust, and not only repugnant to all the common feelings of mankind, but contrary to all the fundamental principles of law; for he regarded it as a principle of natural justice, an essential part of all human policy, never to be departed from under any circumstances or pretence whatever, in any country, "that the criminal law shall be rigidly construed according to its letter—that subsequent laws shall be adapted to crimes, but that all persons shall be tried according to the laws in being at the time of committing the acts charged as criminal." He thought now, as he had on a former occasion expressed, that if the sentiment of that House was perfectly unanimous, and that of the other House also, to communicate that circumstance to France would have a decided influence on persons of all descriptions there. He had assigned some reasons for being of that opinion, but he should say no more upon the subject at present. If there was a point on which his opinion was more clear than on any other, it was upon the abstract rule of justice with respect to the trial of persons for offences against law, and he was sure it was impossible to keep up that rule without condemning, from the beginning to the end, the proceedings against the unfortunate King of France.

The motion was then agreed to.

## ALIEN BILL

*December 31, 1792.*

THE objects of the Alien Bill were stated, on the 28th of December, by Mr. Secretary Dundas as follows: All foreigners arriving in the kingdom were to explain their reasons for coming into this country and to give up all arms except those commonly used for defence or dress. In their movements about the country they were to use passports, by which their movements might be manifest and their conduct observed. Particular attention was to be paid to foreigners who had visited this kingdom within the present year who should hereafter come without obvious reasons and be thus more obnoxious to prudent suspicion.

On the motion for going into a committee on the bill, the Marquis of Titchfield said he agreed that the circumstances of the country were in the highest degree critical; and, in such circumstances, those who were as little inclined to think well of the present administration as himself might be disposed to adopt such a conduct in some instances as at other times they would not be inclined to pursue. His political sentiments and attachments remained the same that they had ever been. His opinion of the gentlemen who composed the present administration was in no respect altered: but he felt the dangers which surrounded us, and the necessity, in that case, of giving to government such support as might enable it to act with effect; a support, therefore, directed to that effect and governed by those circumstances was that which he meant distinctly to give them.

Mr. Fox said that he should trouble the House but with a very few words. What he chiefly had to observe was on what had fallen from the noble marquis in the course of this debate. He thought it rather unnecessary to take much notice of what had been expressed on the feelings of others on a former day. The whole subject had been explained by the noble marquis with so much propriety, dignity and perspicuity that he could not entertain a doubt as to his principles and sentiments. He had so properly come forward to state his opinion as a member of that House, that no doubt could now remain; all that he had to say on that subject was that he concurred entirely with the noble marquis in everything he had said, except his approbation of the present bill. There might be some explanation upon that subject in the committee; he therefore only said that the committee

might, perhaps, be the proper stage for him to deliver his sentiments upon the subject. At present, he must confess, he was not ready to give his assent to the bill. He was not surprised that there was a difference of opinion between the noble marquis and himself upon the bill. They had formed different opinions on the state of the country: the noble marquis had thought the country in danger, and therefore very properly thought that the executive power should be strengthened, and voted for the bill. He, on the contrary, was not aware of such danger, and saw no necessity for the bill; and therefore, when the case was thus explained, it was not surprising that they differed in opinion.—The bill now before the House must, he apprehended, be discussed on two grounds. The first was whether any danger did exist in this country? If that was determined in the negative, there would be an end of the bill; if in the affirmative, then, secondly, whether the present bill contained the proper remedy for such danger? The present was not a question of general support of administration, as had been erroneously stated: it was whether anything was necessary in the present case; and if anything was necessary, whether the present bill was adapted to the end proposed? He was ready to say that if the circumstances of the times were such as ministers described them to be, it would be necessary for him to support government; and he would support government if there was really danger in this country. He was always ready to support government when he thought it wanted support. As a proof of this, he had given his vote for the augmentation both of the army and navy this year. He had done so because he believed this country to be threatened with external danger. But he did not believe there was any internal danger, and therefore it was that he opposed the present bill. If ministers would prove the internal danger to exist, he should consider himself bound to vote for it.

*January 4, 1793.*

On the order of the day for taking into consideration the report of the committee on the alien bill, a debate of considerable length took place. The bill was opposed by Mr. M. A. Taylor, the Earl of Wycombe, Major Maitland, Mr. Grey and Mr. Fox; and supported by Lord Fielding, Lord Beauchamp, Mr. Hardinge, Mr. Jenkinson, Lord Mulgrave, Mr. Windham, Mr. T. Grenville, Mr. Mitford and Mr. Pitt.

Mr. Fox said that the immediate question before the House had been discussed in a manner so general, and so many extraneous topics had been introduced, that he must depart from the

mode in which he had meant to treat it. He would begin with the state of the country, and examine what degree of danger existed when parliament met, and what degree of danger existed now. His opinion on the first day of the session (and he hoped he should not be misunderstood, or what he said misinterpreted now, as had been the case then) was that no danger existed to justify the measure of calling out the militia and assembling parliament, and in the manner in which this was done. His honourable friend (Mr. Windham) had said that the dangers alleged in the proclamation were not to be judged of in detail; that they would make no figure mentioned individually, but were to be estimated by the impression made upon every man's mind by the whole taken together. That they were not to be detailed he was ready to admit, for, "*dolus versatur in generalibus*," they would not bear detailing; if they were to be mentioned individually, they would appear so many insignificant circumstances as to excite ridicule instead of alarm, and therefore his honourable friend did right in begging that they might be so mentioned. The danger, whatever might be its degree, had two sources: first, the fear of the propagation of French opinions in this country; and next, the fear of the progress of the French arms. These might for one purpose be taken conjointly, but he entreated that they might be first considered distinctly, for he saw them in very different points of view. The propagation of French opinions in this country was, in his opinion, so very small, so very much confined, as to afford no serious cause of alarm to any mind of rational constancy. It had been said that the proclamation at the close of the last session of parliament had checked the growth of the evil; but this was a mere *gratis dictum*, for those who said so were not able to adduce juridical, for that was not required of them, but prudential proof that it had ever existed. What, then, was the alarm? Those who thought they had cause for alarm in May might naturally think that they had still greater cause; that those who entertained those obnoxious opinions would disseminate them with greater confidence, would act on them with greater boldness when the French arms prospered. For those parts of the country in which he had not resided he did not pretend to answer; but in this town at least, and, as he had every reason to believe, in all other parts of the kingdom, these French opinions had not been adopted to any degree that could be called alarming. His honourable friend had said, let them compare the phenomena with the theory, and they could not fail to be convinced of the danger. His honourable

friend's mind, he rather believed, was so full of the theory that he could not help inferring the phenomena, instead of raising the theory from well-ascertained phenomena. For his part, he had always said that whatever progress the doctrines of France might make in other countries, they would make but little here, where rational liberty was enjoyed and understood. He founded his hopes of this on his own opinion of the constitution, and the attachment of the people to it; and the event had justified his hopes, instead of the fears of some other persons. If real danger had existed, if those from whom it was apprehended had been proceeding to action, if they had been rising in arms, if they had been going to take possession of the Tower (suppositions which now no man believed), then, indeed, calling out the militia would have been a wise and a necessary measure. But if no such act was impending, to what purpose was a military force prepared? To repel opinions? Opinions were never yet driven out of a country by pikes and swords and guns. Against them the militia was no defence. How, then, were they to be met if they existed? By contempt, if they were absurd; by argument, if specious; by prosecutions, if they were seditious; although that certainly was not a mode which he would recommend, but it was a mode which ministers had before resorted to, and which they had still in their power. If, indeed, any danger did exist, it was not to be repelled by calling out the militia and, under the pretence of waging war with obnoxious political principles, bringing bodies of them nearer and nearer to the metropolis. If, then, no act founded on these opinions was believed to be committed or intended, they who voted against the address on the first day of the session were right; for no good ground had been laid for the measures which they were called upon to approve. Could not ministers have prosecuted Paine without an army? Was any apprehension stated that the trial would not be suffered to go on in the usual course? He had been asked by a learned gentleman whether or not a book with an evil tendency was to be declared innocent because not coupled with any act and without proof of extrinsic circumstances? His answer was, certainly not, but the evil tendency must be proved. Sometimes the evil tendency might be evident from the book itself; sometimes it might not, without being coupled with extrinsic circumstances; and where this was the case, the extrinsic circumstances must be proved to the satisfaction of the jury before they were warranted in pronouncing guilty. This was his opinion; and this, he thought, had been so sufficiently understood by both



sides of the House in the debates on the libel bill as to prevent any misrepresentation. The alarm, then, on the propagation of opinions could not justify the remedy which ministers had adopted, especially when it was coupled with a false assertion of insurrections, and therefore if it did not create it certainly augmented the alarm—he meant not in the mind of his honourable friend; he had been full of alarm for several months—an alarm that had taken such complete possession of his ardent imagination that he could attend to nothing else, and he feared it would be several months more before he could be set right upon this subject. Another ground of alarm was the progress of the French arms. They who represented him as indifferent to that progress did him great injustice. He was by no means so. He thought the same national spirit that, under Louis XIV., had threatened the liberties of all Europe might influence, and actually had influenced, the conduct of the French at present; and he might perhaps think that this national spirit was more likely to collect and act now than at the time to which he alluded. He had even said that this country ought to have interfered at an earlier period. He differed from a noble lord (Wycombe) who had spoken so ably, and with so much propriety, that he was sorry he could not concur in all the noble lord had said on two material points. He was clearly of opinion that the navigation of the Scheldt, if not guaranteed to the Dutch by the letter of the treaty of 1788, was virtually guaranteed to them by that treaty and, if they insisted upon it, would assuredly be a good *casus fœderis*. He differed also from the noble lord in thinking that, however much he might disapprove of any treaty at the time it was negotiating, when concluded it was as religiously to be adhered to by those who disapproved of it as by those who made it. But in all these cases both the contracting parties were to be considered, the principal and the ally, and they were not to go to war, even in support of the treaty, without a mutual regard to the joint interests of both. In the present case he thought it probable that, considering the risk to be run and the doubtful advantage of the monopoly of the Scheldt, Holland might prefer giving it up to the danger and expense of a war. If so, surely we were not to force the Dutch into a war against their own sense of their own interest because we were their ally. The decree of the French convention of instruction to their generals he should also consider as a declaration of hostility if not repealed or explained to our satisfaction; always understanding that this satisfaction was to be demanded in the proper way. He, there-

fore, saw causes of external danger, and might perhaps think that it was in a great measure owing to the neglect of ministers; but when he saw the armies and the fleets of France, and recollected that we had no public means of communication by which any differences that had arisen, or might arise, could be explained, the danger appeared great and imminent indeed. When he considered the various relations in which we stood with respect to France, and the numerous points on which the two countries might interfere, the circumstance alone of having no public communication would in itself be a great cause of peril. For this reason he had voted for an army and a navy, not for any of the eccentric reasons given by his honourable friend (Mr. Windham), that he would support ministers because he thought them unfit for their situations; but because he never knew a minister so bad that he would not trust him with a fleet and army rather than expose the country to danger.

Having thus pointed out the internal and external danger, he would ask how the measures that had been adopted were the proper remedy. If considered distinctly, either the measure or the mode did not apply. If connected, the remedy for the one was no remedy for the other. If France threatened to invade Holland, or refused an explanation of the offensive decree, calling out the militia would be right; but for crushing objectionable opinions or doctrines assuredly not. He knew not how to fight an opinion, nor did history furnish him with instruction. The opinions of Luther and of Calvin had been combated by arms; there was no want of war, no want of blood, no want of confederacies of princes to extirpate them. But were they extirpated? No; they had spread and flourished through bloodshed and persecution. The comparison of these with opinions of another description might seem invidious; but it was so only if they were attacked by reason, not if attacked by war. By force and power no opinion, good or bad, had ever been subdued. But then, it was said, if we went to war, one of the weapons of the French would be instilling their opinions into the minds of our people. If it was, he trusted it would fail. But would a danger so much dreaded in peace be less in time of war? War, it was to be hoped, would be successful; but were we such children as to forget that in war the sway of fortune was great, and that the burden of certain taxes, disgust at ill-success, and indignation at misconduct would dispose the minds of men to receive doctrines and impressions unfavourable to the constitution? Even all this he hoped they would resist;

but it would be putting them to a severer trial than he wished to see.

On these occasions it was not necessary for him to say that he, who loved the constitution, disapproved of the opinions of those who said that we had no constitution. His love of the constitution was to the constitution in its old form, which had subsisted by constant reformation, and was of such a nature that if it was not improving it was in a state of decay. He was happy to find by the resolutions from various parts of the country that in his opinion he was not singular. Like every human production, the constitution was not perfect, and if it were it would not long continue so, unless the practice of it was carefully watched, and if that spirit of vigilance on the part of the people, which was its best security, were lulled to sleep. Melancholy, therefore, as the present prospect was, he saw more danger than ever from that prospect from pushing the present alarm too far, and making the people see the picture all on one side—the dangers of anarchy only, while they were inattentive to the abuses and encroachments of the executive power on the other. If the bill was intended to guard us against internal danger while we were at war with France, we knew that in 1715 and 1745 the French had not been sparing of attempts to sow dissensions and excite rebellion in the country; and yet we had, by the commercial treaty, provided for the protection of the aliens of both countries, even after an actual declaration of war. Did it guard against the introduction of opinions? No. We had not yet come to the measure of prohibiting all French books and papers, which Spain had adopted about a year ago; nor was the policy or the wisdom of it so much applauded as to induce us to follow the example. But these opinions were propagated by conversation! What, then, did a Frenchman, when he landed, find an audience to understand the terms of his philosophy, and immediately open a sort of Tusculan disputation? Were they disseminated in clubs and convivial meetings, where men were disposed to approve rather of what was animated than what was proper? The very idea of a Frenchman getting up to harangue in his broken English at such a meeting was too ridiculous to be mentioned. If they were propagated at all, it must be by English agents, and these, if any such there were, which he did not much believe, would remain in the kingdom if every foreigner were sent out of it.

The preamble of the bill was a complete delusion; for it stated the extraordinary resort of aliens to this country as the

pretence of the bill, while everybody knew that extraordinary resort to be occasioned by circumstances that had no connection with it. At the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when so many Frenchmen came over to this country, would such conduct have been adopted? If it had been it would have deprived us of some of the best commercial advantages that we enjoy at the present day. The spirit of the bill was kept up in the mode of the defence; for it was said by one gentleman that four hundred aliens had *marched* into London in one day, while another gentleman (Mr. Burke) said he had examined these aliens and found that they were not dangerous. Surely, where that right honourable gentleman saw no danger, everybody else might be perfectly at ease! Were an office to be instituted for the purpose of examining the opinions of individuals, and how they stood affected to the constitution of the country, no person could be better qualified than the right honourable gentleman to conduct the inquiry. Those who should stand this test and meet with his approbation might be reckoned sound indeed. With respect to the emigrants, among whom it was meant to make a distinction by the bill, he would protect those who had fallen a sacrifice to their opinions in favour of the old government of France; not because he approved of their principles, but because he respected their misfortunes. With respect to those who suffered for their attachment to the new constitution, he had heard it said by a person of high rank that if La Fayette were here he ought to be sent out of the country. Was this to be endured? Was it fit to vest any ministers with such a power, merely in the hope that they would not abuse it? The third description, those who had fled for fear of punishment for being concerned in the detestable massacre of the 2nd of September, all men would wish to see removed; but this was a sufficient ground for a particular law. The horrors of that day ought not to be mentioned as the act of the French government or the French people, for both disclaimed it; but to disclaim was not enough. That the crime was not prevented or followed up by striking examples of punishment would be an indelible disgrace to Paris and to France. But were we to go to war on account of these inhuman murders? No war could be rational that had not some object which, being obtained, made way for peace. We were not, he trusted, going to war for the restoration of the old French government, nor for the extermination of the French people. What, then, had the horrors committed in France to do with the reasons of war? But they had to do with the passions

of men, and were held out to blind their judgment by exciting their indignation. That we might have a rational and intelligible account of the object for which we were going to war, he had made the propositions on which the House had already decided; and notwithstanding their ill-success, he should not desist till such an account was obtained. The prerogative of the crown to send foreigners out of the kingdom, said to be left untouched by the bill, ought not to remain in doubt. The single instance produced from the reign of Henry the Fourth was counterbalanced by another in the same reign, when the king did the same thing by the authority of parliament which he had done before by his own power. He believed that the prerogative did not exist, and if it did, that it was too dangerous to be suffered to remain. If, on the other hand, it was a prerogative for the good of the people—if, indeed, the word “people” was not expunged from our political dictionary—the good of the people being the only foundation that he knew for any prerogative, it was fit that it should be clearly defined and understood, either by an enacting or a declaratory law.

Mr. Fox concluded with moving, “That the further consideration of the bill be postponed to that day three weeks,” in order, he said, to give time for inquiry into the grounds of the necessity alleged for adopting it.

Mr. Fox’s motion was negatived without a division. After which the bill was read a third time and passed.

To do away the effects of certain calumnies and misrepresentations, of which Mr. Fox had been the object in consequence of the motions made by him in the House of Commons on the 13th, 14th, and 15th of December, 1792, he published in January 1793 his celebrated letter to his constituents; of which the following is a copy.

## A LETTER

FROM THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES JAMES FOX TO THE  
WORTHY AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF THE CITY AND  
LIBERTY OF WESTMINSTER

*January 26, 1793.*

To vote in small minorities is a misfortune to which I have been so much accustomed that I cannot be expected to feel it very acutely.

To be the object of calumny and misrepresentation gives me uneasiness, it is true, but an uneasiness not wholly unmixed with pride and satisfaction, since the experience of all ages and countries teaches us that calumny and misrepresentation are frequently the most unequivocal testimonies of the zeal, and possibly the effect, with which he against whom they are directed has served the public.

But I am informed that I now labour under a misfortune of a far different nature from these, and which can excite no other sensations than those of concern and humiliation. I am told that *you* in general disapprove my late conduct, and that, even among those whose partiality to me was most conspicuous, there are many who, when I am attacked upon the present occasion, profess themselves neither able nor willing to defend me.

That your unfavourable opinion of me (if in fact you entertain any such) is owing to misrepresentation, I can have no doubt. To do away the effects of this misrepresentation is the object of this letter, and I know of no mode by which I can accomplish this object at once so fairly, and (as I hope) so effectually, as by stating to you the different motions which I made in the House of Commons in the first days of this session, together with the motives and arguments which induced me to make them.—On

the first day I moved the House to substitute, in place of the Address, the following Amendment:

To express to his majesty our most zealous attachment to the excellent constitution of this free country, our sense of the invaluable blessings which are derived from it, and our unshaken determination to maintain and preserve it.—To assure his majesty that, uniting with all his majesty's faithful subjects in those sentiments of loyalty to the throne and attachment to the constitution, we feel in common with them the deepest anxiety and concern when we see those measures adopted by the executive government which the law authorises only in cases of insurrection within this realm.

That his majesty's faithful Commons, assembled in a manner new and alarming to the country, think it their first duty, and will make it their first business, to inform themselves of the causes of this measure, being equally zealous to enforce a due obedience to the laws on the one hand and a faithful execution of them on the other.

My motive for this measure was that I thought it highly important, both in a constitutional and a prudential view, that the House should be thoroughly informed of the ground of calling out the militia, and of its own meeting, before it proceeded upon other business.

The law enables the king, in certain cases, by the advice of his privy council, having previously declared the cause, to call forth the militia—and positively enjoins that, whenever such a measure is taken, parliament shall be summoned immediately.

This law, which provided that we should meet, seemed to me to point out to us our duty when met, and to require of us, if not by its letter, yet by a fair interpretation of its spirit, to make it our first business to examine into the causes that had been stated in the proclamation as the motives for exercising an extraordinary power lodged in the crown for extraordinary occasions; to ascertain whether they were true in fact, and whether, if true, they were of such a nature as to warrant the proceeding that had been grounded on them.

Such a mode of conduct, if right upon general principles, appeared to me peculiarly called for by the circumstances under which we were assembled, and by the ambiguity with which the causes of resorting for the first time to this prerogative were stated and defended.

The insurrections (it was said) at Yarmouth, Shields and other places gave ministers a legal right to act; and the general state of the country, independently of these insurrections, made it expedient for them to avail themselves of this right. In other

words, insurrection was the pretext, the general state of the country the cause of the measure. Yet insurrection was the motive stated in the proclamation; and the act of parliament enjoins the disclosure, not of the pretext, but of the cause: so that it appeared to be doubtful whether even the letter of the law had been obeyed; but if it had, to this mode of professing one motive and acting upon another, however agreeable to the habits of some men, I thought it my duty to dissuade the House of Commons from giving any sanction or countenance whatever.

In a prudential view, surely information ought to precede judgment; and we were bound to know what really was the state of the country before we delivered our opinion of it in the address. Whenever the House is called upon to declare an opinion of this nature, the weight which ought to belong to such a declaration makes it highly important that it should be founded on the most authentic information, and that it should be clear and distinct. Did the House mean to approve the measure taken by administration upon the ground of the public pretence of insurrections? If so, they were bound to have before them the facts relative to those insurrections, to the production of which no objection could be stated. Did they mean by their address to declare that the general situation of the country was in itself a justification of what had been done? Upon this supposition it appeared to me equally necessary for them so to inform themselves as to enable them to state with precision to the public the circumstances in this situation to which they particularly adverted. If they saw reason to fear impending tumults and insurrections, of which the danger was imminent and pressing, the measures of his majesty's ministers might be well enough adapted to such an exigency; but surely the evidence of such a danger was capable of being submitted either to the House or to a secret committee; and of its existence without such evidence no man could think it becoming for such a body as the House of Commons to declare their belief.

If, therefore, the address was to be founded upon either of the suppositions above stated, a previous inquiry was absolutely necessary. But there were some whose apprehensions were directed not so much to any insurrections, either actually existing or immediately impending, as to the progress of what are called French opinions, propagated (as is supposed) with industry, and encouraged by success; and to the mischiefs which might in future time arise from the spirit of disobedience and disorder which these doctrines are calculated to inspire.



This danger, they said, was too notorious to require proof; its reality could better be ascertained by the separate observations of individual members than by any proceeding which the House could institute in its collective capacity; and upon this ground, therefore, the address might be safely voted without any previous inquiry.

To have laid any ground for approving without examination was a great point gained for those who wished to applaud the conduct of administration; but in this instance I fear the foundation has been laid without due regard to the nature of the superstructure which it is intended to support; for if the danger consist in false but seducing theories, and our apprehensions be concerning what such theories may in process of time produce, to such an evil it is difficult to conceive how any of the measures which have been pursued are in any degree applicable. Opinions must have taken the shape of overt acts before they can be resisted by the fortifications in the Tower; and the sudden embodying of the militia, and the drawing of the regular troops to the capital, seem to me measures calculated to meet an immediate, not a distant mischief.

Impressed with these notions, I could no more vote upon this last vague reason than upon those of a more definite nature; since, if in one case the premises wanted proof, in the other, where proof was said to be superfluous, the conclusion was not just. If the majority of the House thought differently from me, and if this last ground of general apprehension of future evils (the only one of all that were stated upon which it could with any colour of reason be pretended that evidence was not both practicable and necessary) appeared to them to justify the measures of government; then I say they ought to have declared explicitly the true meaning of their vote, and either to have disclaimed distinctly any belief in those impending tumults and insurrections which had filled the minds of so many thousands of our fellow-subjects with the most anxious apprehensions; or to have commenced an inquiry concerning them, the result of which would have enabled the House to lay before the public a true and authentic state of the nation, to put us upon our guard against real perils, and to dissipate chimerical alarms.

I am aware that there were some persons who thought that to be upon our guard was so much our first interest, in the present posture of affairs, that even to conceal the truth was less mischievous than to diminish the public terror. They dreaded

inquiry, lest it should produce light; they felt so strongly the advantage of obscurity in inspiring terror that they overlooked its other property of causing real peril. They were so alive to the dangers belonging to false security that they were insensible to those arising from groundless alarms. In this frame of mind they might for a moment forget that integrity and sincerity ought ever to be the characteristic virtues of a British House of Commons; and while they were compelled to admit that the House could not, without inquiry, profess its belief of dangers which (if true) might be substantiated by evidence, they might nevertheless be unwilling that the salutary alarm (for such they deemed it) arising from these supposed dangers in the minds of the people should be wholly quieted. What they did not themselves credit, they might wish to be believed by others. Dangers which they considered as distant they were not displeased that the public should suppose near, in order to excite more vigorous exertions.

To these systems of crooked policy and pious fraud I have always entertained a kind of instinctive and invincible repugnance; and if I had nothing else to advance in defence of my conduct but this feeling, of which I cannot divest myself, I should be far from fearing your displeasure. But are there, in truth, no evils in a false alarm besides the disgrace attending those who are concerned in propagating it? Is it nothing to destroy peace, harmony and confidence among all ranks of citizens? Is it nothing to give a general credit and countenance to suspicions which every man may point as his worst passions incline him? In such a state all political animosities are inflamed. We confound the mistaken speculatist with the desperate incendiary. We extend the prejudices which we have conceived against individuals to the political party or even to the religious sect of which they are members. In this spirit a judge declared from the bench, in the last century, that poisoning was a popish trick, and I should not be surprised if some bishops were now to preach from the pulpit that sedition is a presbyterian or a unitarian vice. Those who differ from us in their ideas of the constitution in this paroxysm of alarm we consider as confederated to destroy it. Forbearance and toleration have no place in our minds; for who can tolerate opinions which, according to what the deluders teach, and rage and fear incline the deluded to believe, attack our lives, our properties and our religion?

This situation I thought it my duty, if possible, to avert, by

promoting an inquiry. By this measure the guilty, if such there are, would have been detected, and the innocent liberated from suspicion.

My proposal was rejected by a great majority. I defer with all due respect to their opinion, but retain my own.

My next motion was for the insertion of the following words into the address: "Trusting that your majesty will employ every means of negotiation consistent with the honour and safety of this country to avert the calamities of war."

My motive in this instance is too obvious to require explanation; and I think it the less necessary to dwell much on this subject, because, with respect to the desirableness of peace at all times, and more particularly in the present, I have reason to believe that your sentiments do not differ from mine. If we looked to the country where the cause of war was said principally to originate, the situation of the United Provinces appeared to me to furnish abundance of prudential arguments in favour of peace. If we looked to Ireland, I saw nothing there that would not discourage a wise statesman from putting the connection between the two kingdoms to any unnecessary hazard. At home, if it be true that there are seeds of discontent, war is the hot-bed in which these seeds will soonest vegetate; and of all wars, in this point of view, that war is most to be dreaded in the cause of which kings may be supposed to be more concerned than their subjects.

I wished, therefore, most earnestly for peace; and experience had taught me that the voice even of a minority in the House of Commons might not be wholly without effect in deterring the king's ministers from irrational projects of war. Even upon this occasion, if I had been more supported, I am persuaded our chance of preserving the blessings of peace would be better than it appears to be at present.

I come now to my third motion, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that his majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions that a minister may be sent to Paris to treat with those persons who exercise provisionally the functions of executive government in France, touching such points as may be in discussion between his majesty and his allies and the French nation"; which, if I am rightly informed, is that which has been most generally disapproved. It was made upon mature consideration, after much deliberation with myself, and much consultation with others; and notwithstanding the various misrepresentations of my motives in

making it, and the misconceptions of its tendency, which have prepossessed many against it, I cannot repent of an act which, if I had omitted, I should think myself deficient in the duty which I owe to you and to my country at large.

The motives which urged me to make it were the same desire of peace which actuated me in the former motion, if it could be preserved on honourable and safe terms, and if this were impossible, an anxious wish that the grounds of war might be just, clear and intelligible.

If we or our ally have suffered injury or insult, or if the independence of Europe be menaced by inordinate and successful ambition, I know no means of preserving peace but by obtaining reparation for the injury, satisfaction for the insult, or security against the design which we apprehend; and I know no means of obtaining any of these objects but by addressing ourselves to the power of whom we complain.

If the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, or any other right belonging to the States General, has been invaded, the French executive council are the invaders, and of them we must ask redress. If the rights of neutral nations have been attacked by the decree of the 10th of November, the national convention of France have attacked them, and from that convention, through the organ by which they speak to foreign courts and nations, their minister for foreign affairs, we must demand explanation, disavowal, or such other satisfaction as the case may require. If the manner in which the same convention have received and answered some of our countrymen who have addressed them be thought worthy notice, precisely of the same persons, and in the same manner, must we demand satisfaction upon that head also. If the security of Europe, by any conquests made or apprehended, be endangered to such a degree as to warrant us, on the principles as well of justice as of policy, to enforce by arms a restitution of conquests already made, or a renunciation of such as may have been projected from the executive power of France, in this instance again must we ask such restitution or such renunciation. How all or any of these objects could be attained but by negotiation, carried on by authorised ministers, I could not conceive. I knew indeed that there were some persons whose notions of dignity were far different from mine, and who, in that point of view, would have preferred a clandestine to an avowed negotiation; but I confess I thought this mode of proceeding neither honourable nor safe; and with regard to some of our complaints, wholly impracticable.—Not honourable,

because to seek private and circuitous channels of communication seems to suit the conduct rather of such as sue for a favour than of a great nation which demands satisfaction. Not safe, because neither a declaration from an unauthorised agent, nor a mere gratuitous repeal of the decrees complained of (and what more could such a negotiation aim at?), would afford us any security against the revival of the claims which we oppose; and lastly, impracticable with respect to that part of the question which regards the security of Europe, because such security could not be provided for by the repeal of a decree or anything that might be the result of a private negotiation, but could only be obtained by a formal treaty, to which the existing French government must of necessity be a party; and I know of no means by which it can become a party to such a treaty, or to any treaty at all, but by a minister publicly authorised and publicly received. Upon these grounds, and with these views, as a sincere friend to peace, I thought it my duty to suggest what appeared to me, on every supposition, the most eligible, and, if certain points were to be insisted upon, the only means of preserving that invaluable blessing.

But I had still a further motive; and if peace could not be preserved, I considered the measure which I recommended as highly useful in another point of view. To declare war is, by the constitution, the prerogative of the king; but to grant or withhold the means of carrying it on is (by the same constitution) the privilege of the people, through their representatives; and upon the people at large, by a law paramount to all constitutions—the law of nature and necessity—must fall the burdens and sufferings which are the too sure attendants upon that calamity. It seems therefore reasonable that they who are to pay and to suffer should be distinctly informed of the object for which war is made, and I conceived nothing would tend to this information so much as an avowed negotiation; because from the result of such a negotiation, and by no other means, could we, with any degree of certainty, learn how far the French were willing to satisfy us in all or any of the points which have been publicly held forth as the grounds of complaint against them.—If in none of these any satisfactory explanation were given, we should all admit, provided our original grounds of complaint were just, that the war would be so too; if in some, we should know the specific subjects upon which satisfaction was refused, and have an opportunity of judging whether or not they were a rational ground of dispute; if in all, and a

rupture were nevertheless to take place, we should know that the public pretences were not the real causes of the war.

In the last case which I have put I should hope there is too much spirit in the people of Great Britain to submit to take a part in a proceeding founded on deceit; and in either of the others, whether our cause were weak or strong, we should at all events escape that last of infamies, the suspicion of being a party to the Duke of Brunswick's manifestoes.<sup>1</sup> But this is not all. Having ascertained the precise cause of war, we should learn the true road to peace; and if the cause so ascertained appear adequate, then we should look for peace through war, by vigorous exertions and liberal supplies: if inadequate, the constitution would furnish us abundance of means, as well through our representatives as by our undoubted right to petition king and parliament, of impressing his majesty's ministers with sentiments similar to our own, and of engaging them to compromise or, if necessary, to relinquish an object in which we did not feel interest sufficient to compensate to us for the calamities and hazard of a war.

To these reasonings it appeared to me that they only could object with consistency who would go to war with France on account of her internal concerns; and who would consider the re-establishment of the old, or at least some other form of government, as the fair object of the contest. Such persons might reasonably enough argue, that with those whom they are determined to destroy it is useless to treat.

To arguments of this nature, however, I paid little attention; because the eccentric opinion upon which they are founded was expressly disavowed both in the king's speech and in the addresses of the two Houses of Parliament: and it was an additional motive with me for making my motion that, if fairly debated, it might be the occasion of bringing into free discussion that opinion, and of separating more distinctly those who maintained and acted upon it from others who from different

<sup>1</sup> I have heard that the manifestoes are not to be considered as the acts of the illustrious prince whose name I have mentioned, and that the threats contained in them were never meant to be carried into execution. I bear with great satisfaction whatever tends to palliate the manifestoes themselves; and with still more anything that tends to disconnect them from the name which is affixed to them, because the great abilities of the person in question, his extraordinary gallantry, and above all, his mild and paternal government of his subjects, have long since impressed me with the highest respect for his character; and upon this account it gave me much concern when I heard that he was engaged in an enterprise where, according to my ideas, true glory could not be acquired.

motives (whatever they might be) were disinclined to my proposal.

But if the objections of the violent party appeared to me extravagant, those of the more moderate seemed wholly unintelligible. Would they make and continue war till they can force France to a counter-revolution? No; this they disclaim. What then is to be the termination of the war to which they would excite us? I answer confidently that it can be no other than a negotiation, upon the same principles and with the same men as that which I recommend. I say the same principles, because after war peace cannot be obtained but by a treaty, and a treaty necessarily implies the independency of the contracting parties. I say the same men, because though they may be changed before the happy hour of reconciliation arrive, yet that change, upon the principles above stated, would be merely accidental, and in no wise a necessary preliminary to peace: for I cannot suppose that they who disclaim making war for a change would yet think it right to continue it till a change; or in other words, that the blood and treasure of this country should be expended in a hope that, not our efforts, but time and chance may produce a new government in France, with which it would be more agreeable to our ministers to negotiate than with the present. And it is further to be observed that the necessity of such a negotiation will not in any degree depend upon the success of our arms, since the reciprocal recognition of the independency of contracting parties is equally necessary to those who exact and to those who offer sacrifices for the purpose of peace. I forbear to put the case of ill success, because to contemplate the situation to which we, and especially our ally, might in such an event be placed is a task too painful to be undertaken but in a case of the last necessity. Let us suppose, therefore, the skill and gallantry of our sailors and soldiers to be crowned with a series of uninterrupted victories, and those victories to lead us to the legitimate object of a just war, a safe and honourable peace. The terms of such a peace (I am supposing that Great Britain is to dictate them) may consist in satisfaction, restitution, or even by way of indemnity to us or to others, in cession of territory on the part of France. Now that such satisfaction may be honourable, it must be made by an avowed minister; that such restitution or cession may be safe or honourable, they must be made by an independent power, competent to make them. And thus our very successes and victories will necessarily lead us to that measure of negotia-

tion and recognition which, from the distorted shape in which passion and prejudice represent objects to the mind of man, has by some been considered as an act of humiliation and abasement.

I have reason to believe there are some who think my motion unexceptionable enough in itself but ill-timed. The time was not in my choice. I had no opportunity of making it sooner; and, with a view to its operation respecting peace, I could not delay it. To me, who think that public intercourse with France, except during actual war, ought always to subsist, the first occasion that presented itself after the interruption of that intercourse seemed, of course, the proper moment for pressing its renewal. But let us examine the objections upon this head of time in detail. They appeared to me to be principally four:

First. That by sending a minister to Paris at that period we should give some countenance to a proceeding<sup>1</sup> most unanimously and most justly reprobated in every country of Europe.

To this objection I need not, I think, give any other answer than that it rests upon an opinion, that by sending a minister we pay some compliment, implying approbation, to the prince or state to whom we send him; an opinion which, for the honour of this country, I must hope to be wholly erroneous. We had a minister at Versailles when Corsica was bought and enslaved. We had ministers at the German courts at the time of the infamous partition of Poland. We have generally a resident consul who acts as a minister to the piratical republic of Algiers; and we have more than once sent embassies to emperors of Morocco, reeking from the blood through which by the murder of their nearest relations they had waded to their thrones. In none of these instances was any sanction given by Great Britain to the transactions by which power had been acquired, or to the manner in which it had been exercised.

Secondly. That a recognition might more properly take place at the end, and as the result of a private communication, and (in the phrase used upon a former occasion) as the price of peace, than gratuitously at the outset of a negotiation.

I cannot help suspecting that they who urge this objection have confounded the present case with the question formerly

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written we have learned the sad catastrophe of the proceeding to which I alluded. Those, however, who feel the force of my argument will perceive that it is not at all impaired by this revolting act of cruelty and injustice. Indeed, if I were inclined to see any connection between the two subjects, I should rather feel additional regret for the rejection of a motion which might have afforded one chance more of preventing an act concerning which (out of France) I will venture to affirm that there is not throughout Europe one dissentient voice.



so much agitated of American independence. In this view they appear to me wholly dissimilar—I pray to God that in all other respects they may prove equally so. To recognise the Thirteen States was in effect to withdraw a claim of our own, and it might fairly enough be argued that we were entitled to some price or compensation for such a sacrifice. Even upon that occasion I was of opinion that a gratuitous and preliminary acknowledgment of their independence was most consonant to the principles of magnanimity and policy; but in this instance we have no sacrifice to make, for we have no claim; and the reasons for which the French must wish an avowed and official intercourse can be only such as apply equally to the mutual interest of both nations, by affording more effectual means of preventing misunderstandings and securing peace.

I would further recommend to those who press this objection to consider whether, if recognition be really a sacrifice on our part, the ministry have not already made that sacrifice by continuing to act upon the commercial treaty as a treaty still in force. Every contract must be at an end when the contracting parties have no longer any existence either in their own persons or by their representatives. After the 10th of August the political existence of Louis XVI., who was the contracting party in the treaty of commerce, was completely annihilated. The only question, therefore, is whether the executive council of France did or did not represent the political power so annihilated. If we say they did not, the contracting party has no longer any political existence either in his person or by representation, and the treaty becomes null and void. If we say they did, then we have actually acknowledged them as representatives (for the time at least) of what was the executive government in France. In this character alone do they claim to be acknowledged, since their very style describes them as a provisional executive council and nothing else. If we would preserve our treaty we could not do less; by sending a minister we should not do more.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly. That our ambassador having been recalled, and no British minister having resided at Paris while the conduct of the French was inoffensive with respect to us and our ally, it

<sup>1</sup> If my argument is satisfactory, I have proved that we have recognised the executive council; and it is notorious that through the medium of Mr. Chauvelin we have negotiated with them. But although we have both negotiated and recognised, it would be dishonourable, it seems, to negotiate in such a manner as to imply recognition. How nice are the points upon which great businesses turn! how remote from vulgar apprehension!

would be mortifying to send one thither just at the time when they began to give us cause of complaint.

Mortifying to whom? Not certainly to the House of Commons, who were not a party to the recall of Lord Gower, and who, if my advice were followed, would lose no time in replacing him. To the ministers possibly;<sup>1</sup> and if so, it ought to be a warning to the House that it should not, by acting like the ministers, lose the proper, that is the first, opportunity, and thereby throw extrinsic difficulties of its own creation in the way of a measure in itself wise and salutary.

Fourthly. That by acting in the manner proposed we might give ground of offence to those powers with whom, in case of war, it might be prudent to form connection and alliance.

This objection requires examination. Is it meant that our treating with France in its present state will offend the German powers, by showing them that our ground of quarrel is different from theirs? If this be so, and if we adhere to the principles which we have publicly stated, I am afraid we must either offend or deceive, and in such an alternative I trust the option is not difficult.

If it be said that, though our original grounds of quarrel were different, yet we may, in return for the aid they may afford us in obtaining our objects, assist them in theirs of a counter-revolution, and enter into an offensive alliance for that purpose—I answer that our having previously treated would be no impediment to such a measure. But if it were, I freely confess that this consideration would have no influence with me; because such an alliance, for such a purpose, I conceive to be the greatest calamity that can befall the British nation: for let us not attempt to deceive ourselves; whatever possibility or even probability there may be of a counter-revolution from internal agitation and discord, the means of producing such an event by external force can be no other than the conquest of France. The conquest of France!!!—O! calumniated crusaders, how rational and moderate were your objects!—O! much injured Louis XIV., upon what slight grounds have you been accused of restless and immoderate ambition!—O! tame and feeble Cervantes, with what a timid pencil and faint colours have you painted the portrait of a disordered imagination!

<sup>1</sup> I do not think it would have been mortifying even to them, because in consequence of the discussions which had arisen a measure which had been before indifferent might become expedient; but as this point made no part of my consideration, I have not thought it incumbent upon me to argue it.

I have now stated to you fully, and I trust fairly, the arguments that persuaded me to the course of conduct which I have pursued. In these consists my defence, upon which you are to pronounce; and I hope I shall not be thought presumptuous when I say that I expect with confidence a favourable verdict.

If the reasonings which I have adduced fail of convincing you, I confess indeed that I shall be disappointed, because to my understanding they appear to have more of irrefragable demonstration than can often be hoped for in political discussions; but even in this case, if you see in them probability sufficient to induce you to believe that, though not strong enough to convince you, they, and not any sinister or oblique motives, did in fact actuate me, I have still gained my cause; for in this supposition, though the propriety of my conduct may be doubted, the rectitude of my intentions must be admitted.

Knowing, therefore, the justice and candour of the tribunal to which I have appealed, I wait your decision without fear.—Your approbation I anxiously desire, but your acquittal I confidently expect.

Pitied for my supposed misconduct by some of my friends, openly renounced by others, attacked and misrepresented by my enemies,—to you I have recourse for refuge and protection; and conscious, that if I had shrunk from my duty I should have merited your censure, I feel myself equally certain that by acting in conformity to the motives which I have explained to you, I can in no degree have forfeited the esteem of the city of Westminster, which it has so long been the first pride of my life to enjoy, and which it shall be my constant endeavour to preserve.

C. J. FOX.

SOUTH STREET, 26th January, 1793.

## ADDRESS ON THE KING'S MESSAGE FOR AN AUGMENTATION OF THE FORCES

*February 1, 1793.*

ON the 24th of January, 1793, intelligence arrived in London of the melancholy catastrophe of Louis XVI.; and on the 28th Mr. Secretary Dundas presented a message that: "In the present situation of affairs his majesty thinks it indispensably necessary to make a further augmentation of his forces by sea and land; and relies on the known affection and zeal of the House of Commons to enable his majesty to take the most effectual measures in the present important conjuncture for maintaining the security and rights of his own dominions; for supporting his allies; and for opposing views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France, which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but are peculiarly so when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society."

The message was taken into consideration on the 1st of February, when Mr. Pitt concluded a long and eloquent speech with moving, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message: To offer to his majesty our heartfelt condolence on the atrocious act lately perpetrated at Paris, which must be viewed by every nation in Europe as an outrage on religion, justice and humanity, and as a striking and dreadful example of the effect of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society: To assure his majesty that it is impossible for us not to be sensible of the views of aggrandisement and ambition which, in violation of repeated and solemn professions, have been openly manifested on the part of France, and which are connected with the propagation of principles incompatible with the existence of all just and regular government: that, under the present circumstances, we consider a vigorous and effectual opposition to these views as essential to the security of everything which is most dear and valuable to us as a nation, and to the future tranquillity and safety of all other countries: That, impressed with these sentiments, we shall, with the utmost zeal and alacrity, afford his majesty the most effectual assistance to enable his majesty to make a further augmentation of his forces by sea and land, and to act as circumstances may require in the present important conjuncture for maintaining the security and honour of his crown, for supporting the just rights of his allies, and for preserving to his people the undisturbed enjoyment of the blessings which, under the Divine Providence, they derive from the British constitution."

—The address was seconded by Lord Beauchamp. The Earl of Wycombe conceived it to be his indispensable duty to use every argument in his power to prevent a war. The country, he insisted, was in no danger whatever, being equally secured by its insular situation, its internal resources, and the strong attachment of the people to the constitution. As for French principles, he had no idea of going to war against them; and with respect to the cruelties perpetrated in France, he attributed them to the infamous expedition of the Duke of Brunswick, which might be called a fraternity of kings for the purpose of imposing despotism on all Europe.—Mr. Whitbread opposed the address. He prefaced his observations by declaring his abhorrence of the atrocious deed recently committed in France: it would stand, he said, one of the foremost in the black catalogue of crimes which history had to record; it would remain a foul stain upon the national character of the people amongst whom it had been perpetrated. But he denied that the barbarities imputed to France were the necessary consequences of the French revolution, or of republican principles. To the conduct of the powers combined against the liberties of France, to the sanguinary manifestoes of the Duke of Brunswick, might they be without hesitation ascribed. These manifestoes bore rather the stamp and character of those Gothic and Scythian invaders, with whom to conquer and destroy were the same, than of the gallant and generous leader of the armies of two enlightened princes of Europe at the close of the eighteenth century. The spirit of Attila was discernible in them, who, describing the manner in which he himself made war, in the emphatical words recorded by Mr. Gibbon, had said, "Where Attila's horse sets his foot the grass never grows." He deprecated a war with France. He denied it was justifiable upon any of the grounds stated in the papers on the table; nor would he allow that ministers had done their utmost to avoid so dreadful a calamity.

Mr. Fox said that although some words had fallen from the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer which might lead him to think that war was not absolutely determined upon, yet the general tenor and impression of his speech was such as to convince him that there never was a time when the duty which he owed not merely to his immediate constituents, but to the whole people of Great Britain, of whom the members of that House were individually and collectively the virtual representatives, more imperiously called upon him, and upon every man, to speak out and declare his sentiments frankly and fairly. The misrepresentations and misconstructions of what he and those who thought as he did had already said in the course of the present session, left him no room to doubt that what he must now say would be equally, and perhaps as successfully, misrepresented and misconstrued. This only served to show that they were on a service of honour as well as danger; but if he were deterred by misrepresentation and calumny from delivering

opinions because they might be unpopular, and from deprecating a war with France as an evil to be avoided by every means consistent with the honour and safety of us and our allies, he should basely betray his trust to his constituents and his country.

The right honourable gentleman had introduced the several grounds of dispute with France ably and eloquently; but the reasons for going to war, he did not mean to say for arming, had not been very accurately treated. The crimes, the murders and the massacres that had been committed in France he did not view with less horror, he did not consider as less atrocious, than those who made them the perpetual theme of their declamation, although he put them entirely out of the question in the present debate. The condemnation and execution of the king he pronounced to be an act as disgraceful as any that the page of history recorded; and whatever opinions he might at any time have given in private conversation, he had expressed none certainly in that House on the justice of bringing kings to trial: revenge being unjustifiable and punishment useless, where it could not operate either by way of prevention or example, he did not view with less detestation the injustice and inhumanity that had been committed towards that unhappy monarch. Not only were the rules of criminal justice, rules that more than any other ought to be strictly observed, violated with respect to him; not only was he tried and condemned without any existing law to which he was personally amenable, and even contrary to laws that did actually exist, but the degrading circumstances of his imprisonment, the unnecessary and insulting asperity with which he had been treated, the total want of republican magnanimity in the whole transaction (for even in that House it could be no offence to say that there might be such a thing as magnanimity in a republic) added every aggravation to the inhumanity and injustice of those acts.

Now, having said all this as the genuine expression of his feelings and his conviction, he saw neither propriety nor wisdom in that House passing judgment on any act committed in another nation which had no direct reference to us. The general maxim of policy always was that the crimes perpetrated in one independent state were not cognisable by another. Need he remind the House of our former conduct in this respect? Had we not treated, had we not formed alliances with Portugal and with Spain, at the very time when those kingdoms were disgraced and polluted by the most shocking and barbarous acts of superstition and cruelty, of racks, torture and burnings, under

the abominable tyranny of the inquisition? Did we ever make these outrages against reason and humanity a pretext for war? Did we ever inquire how the princes with whom we had relative interests either obtained or exercised their power? Why, then, were the enormities of the French in their own country held up as a cause of war? Much of these enormities had been attributed to the attack of the combined powers; but this he neither considered as an excuse, nor would argue on as a palliation. If they dreaded, or had felt an attack, to retaliate on their fellow-citizens, however much suspected, was a proceeding which justice disclaimed; and he had flattered himself that when men were disclaiming old and professing to adopt new principles, those of persecution and revenge would be the first that they would discard. No man felt greater horror at the proceedings of the combined powers than he did. A combination more dangerous to the tranquillity of Europe and the liberties of mankind had never been formed. It had been said that Austria was not the aggressor in the war with France. Had those who said so seen the treaty of Pilnitz? Let them look at that treaty, take the golden rule of supposing themselves in the situation of the French and, judging of others as they would wish to be judged, say whether or not the French had been the aggressors. But, whatever might be thought of Austria, was the King of Prussia attacked by France? Were his territories menaced, or his allies insulted? Had he not been completely the aggressor, he would have called upon us as his allies for succour: no such call had ever been heard of: a sufficient proof, if any proof were wanting, that he never considered himself but as engaging in an offensive war. What were the principles of these combined powers? They saw a new form of government establishing in France, and they agreed to invade the kingdom, to mould its government according to their own caprice, or to restore the despotism which the French had overthrown. Was it for the safety of English liberty (liberty that might still be mentioned without offence) that if we should make any change in our form of government or constitution, and that change should be disagreeable to foreign powers, they should be considered as having a right to combine and replace what we had rejected, or give us anything else in its room by fire and sword?

He would not go over the atrocious manifestoes that preceded or followed the march of the combined armies; there was not a man in the House, or at least but one (Mr. Burke), who would attempt to defend them. But these it seemed were not to be

executed—he hoped they were not; but the only security he knew of was that those who issued them had not the means. What was their conduct? Their mode of raising money was at least as bad as that with which the French were reproached. The French confiscated property where they carried their arms; the Duke of Brunswick took what he wanted and gave paper for it in the name of the unfortunate monarch whom he pretended to assist. He contracted debts in the name of the French king which he knew the French king might never have the means or the inclination to pay; and this swindling trick, for which any man in this country would have been convicted and punished, he continued after he had begun his retreat. Yet we stood by and saw all this without alarm; certainly without interference. We perceived no danger in the success of despotism; but the moment the opposite cause became successful, our fears were extreme.

He should now show that all the topics to which he had adverted were introduced into the debate to blind the judgment by rousing the passions, and were none of them the just grounds of war. These grounds were three: the danger of Holland; the decree of the French convention of November the 19th; and the general danger to Europe from the progress of the French arms. With respect to Holland, the conduct of ministers afforded a fresh proof of their disingenuousness. They could not state that the Dutch had called upon us to fulfil the terms of our alliance. They were obliged to confess that no such requisition had been made; but added that they knew the Dutch were very much disposed to make it. Whatever might be the words of the treaty, we were bound in honour, by virtue of that treaty, to protect the Dutch, if they called upon us to do so, but neither by honour nor the treaty till then. The conduct of the Dutch was very unfortunate upon this occasion. In the order for a general fast by the States, it was expressly said, “that their neutrality seemed to put them in security amidst surrounding armies, and had hitherto effectively protected them from molestation.”

This he by no means construed into giving up the opening of the Scheldt on their part; but it pretty clearly showed that they were not disposed to make it the cause of a war unless forced to do so by us. But France had broken faith with the Dutch—was this a cause for us to go to war? How long was it since we considered a circumstance tending to diminish the good understanding between France and Holland as a misfortune to this country? The plain state of the matter was that we were bound to save Holland from war, or by war, if called upon; and



that to force the Dutch into a war at so much peril to them, which they saw and dreaded, was not to fulfil but to abuse the treaty. Hence he complained of the disingenuous conduct of ministers in imputing that to the Dutch which the Dutch wished to avoid.

The decree of the 19th of November he considered as an insult; and the explanation of the executive council as no adequate satisfaction; but the explanation showed that the French were not disposed to insist upon that decree, and that they were inclined to peace; and then our ministers, with haughtiness unexampled, told them they had insulted us, but refused to tell them the nature of the satisfaction that we required. It was said we must have security; and he was ready to admit that neither a disavowal of the executive council of France, nor a tacit repeal by the convention, on the intimation of an unacknowledged agent, of a decree which they might renew the day after they repealed it, would be a sufficient security. But at least we ought to tell them what we meant by security; for it was the extreme of arrogance to complain of insult without deigning to explain what reparation we required: and he feared an indefinite term was here employed, not for the purpose of obtaining, but of precluding satisfaction. Next it was said they must withdraw their troops from the Austrian Netherlands before we could be satisfied. Were we, then, come to that pitch of insolence as to say to France, "You have conquered part of an enemy's territory who made war upon you, we will not interfere to make peace, but we require you to abandon the advantages you have gained while he is preparing to attack you anew"? Was this the neutrality we meant to hold out to France? "If you are invaded and beaten we will be quiet spectators; but if you hurt your enemy, if you enter his territory, we declare against you." If the invasion of the Netherlands was what now alarmed us—and that it ought to alarm us if the result was to make the country an appendage to France there could be no doubt—we ought to have interposed to prevent it in the very first instance; for it was the natural consequence, which every man foresaw, of a war between France and Austria. The French now said they would evacuate the country at the conclusion of the war, and when its liberties were established. Was this sufficient? By no means: but we ought to tell them what we would deem sufficient, instead of saying to them, as we were now saying, "This is an aggravation, this is nothing, and this is insufficient." That war was unjust which told not an enemy the ground of provocation

and the measure of atonement; it was as impolitic as unjust, for without the object of contest clearly and definitively stated, what opening could there be for treating of peace? Before going to war with France, surely the people, who must pay and must suffer, ought to be informed on what object they were to fix their hopes for its honourable termination. After five or six years of war the French might agree to evacuate the Netherlands as the price of peace. Was it clear that they would not do so now, if we would condescend to propose it in intelligible terms? Surely in such an alternative the experiment was worth trying. But, then, we had no security against French principles! What security would they be able to give us after a war which they could not give now?

With respect to the general danger of Europe, the same arguments applied, and to the same extent. To the general situation and security of Europe we had been so scandalously inattentive; we had seen the entire conquest of Poland, and the invasion of France, with such marked indifference that it would be difficult now to take up with the grace of sincerity; but even this would be better provided for by proposing terms before going to war.

He had thus shown that none of the professed causes were grounds for going to war. What, then, remained but the internal government of France, always disavowed, but ever kept in mind, and constantly mentioned? The destruction of that government was the avowed object of the combined powers whom it was hoped we were to join; and we could not join them heartily if our object was one thing while theirs was another; for in that case the party whose object was first obtained might naturally be expected to make separate terms, and there could be no cordiality nor confidence. To this, then, we came at last, that we were ashamed to own our engaging to aid the restoration of despotism, and collusively sought pretexts in the Scheldt and the Netherlands. Such would be the real cause of the war, if war we were to have—a war which he trusted he should soon see as generally execrated as it was now thought to be popular. He knew that for this wish he should be represented as holding up the internal government of France as an object for imitation. He thought the present state of government in France anything rather than an object of imitation; but he maintained as a principle inviolable that the government of every independent state was to be settled by those who were to live under it, and not by foreign force. The conduct of the French in the Netherlands

was the same with such a war as he was now deprecating, and might be an omen of its success. It was a war of pikes and bayonets against opinions; it was the tyranny of giving liberty by compulsion; it was an attempt to introduce a system among a people by force, which the more it was forced upon them the more they abhorred. The French appeared less moderate from pretending to be more so than other nations; by overturning the ancient government and imposing theories of their own on a people who disliked them, while they pretended to liberate, instead of using their right of conquest. But was this such a crime in the eyes of Europe? As was said of the woman caught in adultery, which of the courts, that of London or Berlin, would cast the first stone? The States of Brabant, they were told, had, *pacta conventa*, a legal and free government of their own. But were the States free under the House of Austria, under Joseph, Leopold, or Francis? O yes! for when Dumourier was triumphantly entering Brussels, and the Austrian governors making their escape at a postern, they sent back a declaration to the States, restoring their magna charta, the *joyeuse entrée*, which had been the perpetual subject of dispute with their sovereign, and which all their remonstrances could never obtain before. This was the government that acted with such honour to its subjects and put the French to shame! He feared that if they were to examine the conduct of foreign powers in point of honour and good faith, they must be compelled to speak less civilly of them than policy would dictate. Why, then, had he touched upon it? Because the conduct of France was perpetually introduced to inflame and delude, and it was his duty to dispel the delusion by showing that it was not more exceptional than that of its neighbours.

In all decisions on peace or war, it was important to consider what we might lose and what we could gain. On the one hand, extension of territory was neither expected nor eligible: on the other, although he feared not the threat of the French minister of marine, would any man say that our ally might not suffer; that the events of war might not produce a change in the internal state of Holland, and in the situation of the stadtholder, too afflicting for him to anticipate? In weighing the probable danger, every consideration ought to be put into the scale. Was the state of Ireland such as to make war desirable? That was a subject which had been said by some honourable gentlemen to be too delicate to be touched upon; but he approved not of that delicacy which taught men to shut their eyes to danger. The

state of Ireland he was not afraid to mention. He thought it both promising and alarming; promising, because the government of this country had forced the government of that kingdom to an acknowledgment of the undoubted rights of a great majority of the people of Ireland, after having in a former session treated their humble petition with contempt, and in the summer endeavoured to stir up the Protestants against the Catholics; alarming, because the gross misconduct of administration had brought the government and the legislature into contempt in the eyes of the people. Here he called on his honourable friend (Mr. Windham) who had given the aid of his great talents, as secretary in Ireland, to an administration with which he had the honour of being connected, on the same principle on which he had declared that he would support ministers when they had done mischief enough to be formidable, when they had brought the country into a situation sufficiently perilous, to accept of the same situation again, and avert the danger which they had created. He hoped the plan to be pursued would be conciliatory, that concession to the claims of the people would be deemed wisdom, and the time of danger the fit time for reform; in short, he hoped that the plan would be in everything contrary to the declarations of the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer.

The people of this country loved their constitution. They had experienced its benefits; they were attached to it from habit. Why, then, put their love to any unnecessary test? That love by being tried could not be made greater, nor would the fresh burdens and taxes which war must occasion more endear it to their affection. If there was any danger from French principles, to go to war without necessity was to fight for their propagation.

On these principles as reprobated in the proposed address he would freely give his opinion. It was not the principles that were bad and to be reprobated, but the abuse of them. From the abuse, not the principles, had flowed all the evils that afflicted France. The use of the word "equality" by the French was deemed highly objectionable. When taken as they meant it, nothing was more innocent; for what did they say? "All men are equal in respect of their rights." To this he assented; all men had equal rights, equal rights to unequal things; one man to a shilling, another to a thousand pounds; one man to a cottage, another to a palace; but the right in both was the same, an equal right of enjoying, an equal right of inheriting or acquiring, and of possessing inheritance or acquisition. The

effect of the proposed address was to condemn, not the abuse of those principles (and the French had much abused them), but the principles themselves. To this he could not assent, for they were the principles on which all just and equitable government was founded.

Mr. Fox said he had already differed sufficiently with a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke) on this subject to wish to provoke any fresh difference; but even against so great an authority he must say that the people are the sovereign in every state; that they have a right to change the form of their government, and a right to cashier their governors for misconduct, as the people of this country cashiered James II., not by parliament, or any regular form known to the constitution, but by a convention speaking the sense of the people; that convention produced a parliament and a king. They elected William to a vacant throne, not only setting aside James, whom they had justly cashiered for misconduct, but his innocent son. Again, they elected the House of Brunswick, not individually, but by dynasty; and that dynasty to continue while the terms and conditions on which it was elected were fulfilled, and no longer. He could not admit the right to do all this but by acknowledging the sovereignty of the people as paramount to all other laws.

But it was said that although we had once exercised this power, we had, in the very act of exercising it, renounced it for ever. We had neither renounced it, nor, if we had been so disposed, was such a renunciation in our power. We elected first an individual, then a dynasty, and lastly passed an act of parliament, in the reign of Queen Anne, declaring it to be the right of the people of this realm to do so again without even assigning a reason. If there were any persons among us who doubted the superior wisdom of our monarchical form of government, their error was owing to those who changed its strong and irrefragable foundation in the right and choice of the people to a more flimsy ground of title. To those who proposed repelling opinions by force, the example of the French in the Netherlands might teach the impotence of power to repel or to introduce. But how was a war to operate in keeping opinions supposed dangerous out of this country? It was not surely meant to beat the French out of their own opinions; and opinions were not like commodities, the importation of which from France war would prevent. War, it was to be lamented, was a passion inherent in the nature of man; and it was curious to observe what at various periods had been the various pretences. In ancient times wars were made

for conquest. To these succeeded wars for religion, and the opinions of Luther and Calvin were attacked with all the fury of superstition and of power.

The next pretext was commerce; and it would probably be allowed that no nation that made war for commerce ever found the object accomplished on concluding peace. Now we were to make war on account of opinions: what was this but recurring again to an exploded cause? For a war about principles in religion was as much a war about opinions as a war about principles in politics. In the excellent set of papers alluded to by the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer, and which he had no doubt had been liberally distributed to the gentlemen who had lately got so many new lights on French affairs, the atheistical speech of Dupont in the convention was quoted. But did they believe all the French to be atheists and unbelievers on account of that speech? If they did so believe, there would certainly be no reason to complain of them for want of faith. But, admitting that the French were all atheists, were we going to war with them in order to propagate the Christian religion by means contrary to the precepts of Christ? The justifiable grounds of war were insult, injury or danger. For the first, satisfaction; for the second, reparation; for the third, security was the object. Each of these, too, was the proper object of negotiation, which ought ever to precede war, except in case of an attack actually commenced. How had we negotiated? Not in any public or efficient form, a mode which he suspected, and lamented, by his proposing it had been prevented. A noble lord (Beauchamp) had said that he thought it his duty not to conceal his opinions on so important an occasion by absence or by silence; formerly, the noble lord did not think absence so great a crime. During the nine unfortunate years that he had maintained the same political connections with himself, the noble lord's attendance had not been very assiduous; and he rejoiced to hear that the noble lord meant now to compensate for past omissions by future diligence.

When the triple league was formed to check the ambition of Louis XIV., the contracting parties did not deal so rigorously by him as we were now told it was essential to the peace of Europe that we should deal by the French. They never told Louis that he must renounce all his conquests in order to obtain peace. But then it was said to be our duty to hate the French for the part they took in the American war. He had heard of a duty to love, but a duty to hate was new to him. That duty, however,

ought to direct our hatred to the old government of France; not to the new, which had no hand in the provocation. Unfortunately, the new French government was admitted to be the successor of the old in nothing but its faults and its offences. It was a successor to be hated and to war against: but it was not a successor to be negotiated with. He feared, however, that war would be the result, and from war apprehending greater evils than he durst name, he should have shrunk from his duty if he had not endeavoured to obtain an exposition of the distinct causes. Of all wars, he dreaded that the most which had no definite object, because of such a war it was impossible to see the end. Our war with America had a definite object, an unjust one, indeed, but still definite; and after wading through years on years of expense and blood, after exhausting invectives and terms of contempt on the "vagrant congress," "one Adams," "one Washington," etc., we were compelled at last to treat with this very congress and those very men. The Americans, to the honour of their character, committed no such horrid acts as had disgraced the French; but we were as liberal of our obloquy to the former then as to the latter now. If we did but know for what we were to fight, we might look forward with confidence and exert ourselves with unanimity; but while kept thus in the dark, how many might there be who would believe that we were fighting the battles of despotism! To undeceive those who might fall into this unhappy delusion, it would be no derogation from the dignity of office to grant an explanation. If the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer would but yet consider—if he would but save the country from a war—above all a war of opinion—however inconsistent with his former declarations his measures might be, he would gladly consent to give him a general indemnity for the whole, and even a vote of thanks. Let not the fatal opinion go abroad that kings have an interest different from that of their subjects; that between those who have property and those who have none there is not a common cause and common feeling!

He knew that he himself should now be represented as the partisan of France, as he had been formerly represented the partisan of America. He was no stranger to the industry with which these and other calumnies were circulated against him, and therefore he was not surprised. But he really was surprised to find that he could not walk the streets without hearing whispers that he and some of his friends had been engaged in improper correspondence with persons in France. If there were

any foundation for such a charge, the source of the information could be mentioned. If it were true it was capable of proof. If any man believed this, he called upon him to state the reasons of his belief. If any man had proofs, he challenged him to produce them. But to what was this owing? The people had been told by their representatives in parliament that they were surrounded with dangers and had been shown none. They were, therefore, full of suspicion and prompt of belief. All this had a material tendency to impede freedom of discussion, for men would speak with reserve, or not speak at all, under the terror of calumny. But he found by a letter in a newspaper, from Mr. Law, that he lived in a town where a set of men associated, and calling themselves gentlemen (Mr. Reeves's association at the Crown and Anchor), not only received anonymous letters reflecting on individuals, but corresponded with the writers of such letters, and even sometimes transmitted their slanders to the secretary of state. He could not be much surprised at any aspersion on his character, knowing this; and therefore he hoped the House would give him the credit of being innocent till an open charge was made; and that if any man heard improper correspondence imputed to him in private, he would believe that he heard a falsehood which he who circulated it in secret durst not utter in public.



## ADDRESS ON THE KING'S MESSAGE RESPECTING THE DECLARATION OF WAR BY FRANCE

*February 12, 1793.*

ON the 11th of February Mr. Secretary Dundas presented the following message from his majesty:

" His majesty thinks proper to acquaint the House of Commons that the assembly now exercising the powers of government in France have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against his majesty and the United Provinces. Under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, his majesty has taken the necessary steps to maintain the honour of his crown and to vindicate the rights of his people; and his majesty relies with confidence on the firm and effectual support of the House of Commons, and on the zealous exertions of a brave and loyal people, in prosecuting a just and necessary war; and in endeavouring, under the blessing of Providence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the further progress of a system which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, and is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity and justice.

" In a cause of such general concern, his majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with his majesty by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe."

On the following day Mr. Pitt entered into an examination of the French declaration, and concluded with moving, " That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message informing us that the assembly, now exercising the powers of government in France, have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and property of his majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations and of the most positive stipulations of treaty: and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against his majesty and the United Provinces: to assure his majesty that, under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, we most gratefully acknowledge his majesty's care and vigilance in taking the necessary steps for maintaining the honour of his crown, and vindicating the rights of his people; that his majesty may rely on the firm and effectual support of the representatives of a brave and loyal people in the prosecution of a just and necessary war, and in endeavouring, under

the blessing of Providence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the further progress of a system which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, and is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity and justice: That, in a cause of such general concern, it must afford us great satisfaction to learn that his majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with his majesty by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe: That we are persuaded that whatever his majesty's faithful subjects must consider as most dear and sacred, the stability of our happy constitution, the security and honour of his majesty's crown, and the preservation of our laws, our liberty and our religion, are all involved in the issue of the present contest; and that our zeal and exertions shall be proportioned to the importance of the conjuncture, and to the magnitude and value of the objects for which we have to contend."—After the motion had been seconded by Mr. Powys,

Mr. Fox said that on an occasion so important, and not fearing the charge of pusillanimity from considering the present crisis as highly alarming, it would ill become the duty which he owed to his constituents and to the nation were he to decline meeting the imputation of being the abettor of France with which he was already menaced; or by the bold misconstructions of his sentiments and arguments to which he had been accustomed, be deterred from examining and stating what was the true situation in which the country was involved in war. He had never accused the honourable gentleman who seconded the address of a systematic opposition to ministers, nor of acting upon any system; but he called upon him to name those persons in the House, if any such there were, whom he meant to include under the description of supporters of the French system. The honourable gentleman knew that just so were those treated who opposed the folly and injustice of the American war. Yet, notwithstanding their being long and industriously misrepresented as the abettors of rebellion, a band of as patriotic and as honourable men as ever deserved public gratitude by public services, by some of whom he trusted he should be supported in opposing the address now moved, united their abilities to put an end to that war, and at length succeeded.

The right honourable gentleman who moved the address had stated the origin and necessity of the war on grounds widely different from those assumed by the honourable gentleman who seconded it. The latter had said that the power of France, under every change of men and circumstances, was a monster whose hand was against all nations, and that the hand of every nation

ought to be against France: the former, that the cause of the war was not our general bad opinion of France, but specific aggressions on the part of France. So far the difference was great with respect to our immediate situation of being actually at war; and it was still greater when we came to inquire into our prospect of peace. If we were at war because France was a monster whose hand was against all nations, it must be *bellum internecinum*—a war of extermination; for nothing but unconditional submission could be adequate to the end for which the war was undertaken, and to that alone must we look for a safe or honourable peace. If, on the contrary, we were at war on account of a specific aggression, for that aggression atonement might be made, and the object being obtained, peace might be concluded. He therefore hoped that the right honourable mover of the address was sincere in the statement he had given, although he had failed in making out the grounds on which he endeavoured to support it. Few of those, he trusted, who had been most zealous in recommending the expediency of this war, wished it to be a war of extermination—a war for extirpating French principles, not for circumscribing French power; yet all their arguments tended to alarm him. They never talked of the danger of French power without introducing as a danger more imminent the propagation of French principles. The honourable gentleman asked if he could be expected to make terms with a highwayman, or to take the highwayman's purse as a satisfaction for the attack upon his own? Certainly not. The honourable gentleman knew his duty to society better than to let the highwayman escape if he had the means of bringing him to punishment. But this allusion showed that the war with France was, in the opinion of the honourable gentleman, a war of vindictive justice. We said that our object in going to war was not to effect a change in the internal government of France, but to weaken her power, which, in its present state, was dangerous to us, our allies and to Europe; and that object obtained, we were willing to make peace. But would any man say that, when he had disarmed a highwayman, it was safe to leave him free to get other arms? No man, certainly; and no more on this principle could we, in any state of humiliation to which the power of France might be reduced, leave her at liberty to recruit that power, and to renew aggressions, to which we contended she must have the inclination whenever she had the means. The honourable gentleman might support ministers for any reasons that to himself seemed good; either because he thought them wise or ignorant, honest or

dishonest; but he had no right to accuse those who thought differently from himself of sowing disaffection among the people because they wished to inform the people what were the true grounds of the war which they were called upon to support with their property and their lives. The honourable gentleman rejoiced that the public entertained a more favourable opinion of ministers, in the present crisis, than ministers deserved. Did he mean to argue that when ministers, by their misconduct, had brought the country into danger, and the people, ignorant of their true characters, were disposed to think well of them, the House of Commons, who knew better, should endeavour to continue instead of removing their delusion? His doctrine would then come to this—that implicit confidence in ministers, so often and so justly reprobated, was the first duty of the House; that they had nothing to watch, and ought never to inquire. Monarchy, it was truly said, was the corner-stone of our constitution, and of all the blessings we enjoyed under it; but it was not the only corner-stone; there was another fully as important—the constant jealousy and vigilance, both of the people and their representatives, with respect to all the acts of the executive power.

Mr. Fox said he felt himself considerably disappointed at the conduct of his majesty's ministers. He had flattered himself that when unanimity was so very desirable they would have brought down a message from his majesty calculated to ensure it; that they would not have considered a triumph over the very small number to which they boasted of having reduced their opponents to be a matter of such consequence as to call for an address to which they knew those few opponents could not agree, because to do so must preclude them from all subsequent inquiry. If they had moved an address simply pledging the cordial co-operation of the House in prosecuting a just and necessary war for the purpose of a safe and honourable peace, to such an address, whatever might have been his opinion of the previous conduct of ministers, whether he had thought it temperate and conciliatory or arrogant and provoking, he should have agreed. But the House was now called upon to vote that ministers had given no cause or provocation for the war; to say that they would enter into no investigation of the origin of the war; to give them indemnity for the past and a promise of support for the future. This was the manifest tendency of the address; and to prevent the want of unanimity which such an address could not but occasion he should move an amendment

in which even the warmest advocate of the war might concur, because it expressed no disapprobation of ministers, as theirs ought to have expressed no approbation.

But first he must examine the alleged causes of the war. He would not enter into any of the commonplace arguments on the miseries and calamities inseparable from war. He did not mean to call them commonplace arguments in the bad sense of the words, for they were truths so familiar to the minds of men that they were never listened to without assent; and, however unnecessary it might be to enforce them by eloquence, or amplify them by declamation, their being universally admitted was sufficient to prove that war should never be undertaken when peace could be maintained without breach of public faith, injury to national honour, or hazard of future security. The causes of war with France were in no respect different now from what they were under the government of Louis XIV. or Louis XVI. What, then, were those causes? Not an insult or aggression, but a refusal of satisfaction when specifically demanded. What instance had ministers produced of such demand and of such refusal? He admitted that the decree of 19th November entitled this country to require an explanation; but even of this they could not show that any clear and specific explanation had been demanded. Security that the French would not act upon that decree was, indeed, mentioned in one of Lord Grenville's letters, but what kind of security was neither specified, nor even named. The same might be said with respect to the opening of the Scheldt and their conquest of Brabant. We complained of an attack on the rights of our ally; we remonstrated against an accession of territory alarming to Europe; but we proposed nothing that would be admitted as satisfaction for the injury; we pointed out nothing that would remove our alarm. Lord Grenville said something about withdrawing their troops from the Austrian Netherlands; but if by that was understood a requisition to withdraw their troops while they were at war with the emperor, without any condition that such evacuation of territory conquered from the enemy was to be the price of peace, it was such an insult as entitled them to demand satisfaction of us. The same argument applied to their conquest of Savoy from the King of Sardinia, with whom, in his opinion, they were at war as much as with the emperor. Would it be said that it was our business only to complain, and theirs to propose satisfaction? Common sense must see that this was too much for one independent power to expect of another. By what clue could they

discover what would satisfy those who did not choose to tell with what they would be satisfied? How could they judge of the too little or the too much? And was it not natural for them to suppose that from complaints for which nothing was stated as adequate satisfaction, there was no disposition to withdraw? Yet on this the whole question of aggression hinged; for that the refusal of satisfaction, and not the insult, was the justifiable cause of war was not merely his opinion, but the opinion of all the writers on the law of nations; and how could that be said to have been refused which was never asked? He lamented that, at a time when the dearest interests of the country were at stake, the House should have felt so little concern as to deprive him of the opportunity of making the motion of which he had given notice for want of a sufficient attendance to ballot for an election committee. By that motion he meant to press for a distinct and specific declaration of the causes of the war, and had he succeeded it would have had this good effect, that both we and the enemy should have known the grounds of contest, have been able to appreciate them, and the war might have been but of short duration. There was much in the decree by which the French declared war which could not fairly be alleged as just cause of war. But, under the former good government of France, was it unusual to crowd into a manifesto setting forth the causes of war every complaint that could be imagined, good, bad and indifferent? It was, indeed, to be wished that nothing should be introduced into such declarations but what was at once true and important; but such had not yet been the practice of statesmen, who seemed more attentive to the number than the validity of their complaints. In the year 1779 the Spanish declaration was swelled to a hundred articles; and to examine every article of the present French declaration would only show that those who now exercised the executive government were not wiser than their predecessors.

To have suffered Earl Gower to remain at Paris after the 10th of August would have implied no recognition of the government that succeeded that to which he had his formal mission any more than to have negotiated with that government in the most direct and safe way in preference to one that was indirect and hazardous. But the right honourable gentleman, who could not get rid of the idea of recognition, exclaimed, "Would you recognise a government which, by its own confession, is no government; which declares itself only provisional till a government can be framed?" This he would answer was the safest of

all recognitions, if a recognition it must be; for the government being only provisional, we could only be understood to recognise provisionally, and were at liberty to act as the case might require with any other power that might arise in its stead. But did not history show us that to treat and to recognise were not considered as the same? Did not we treat with Philip of Spain as king at the very time that we were at war to dispute his succession; and was not the recognition of his title, far from being considered as admitted by us on that account, actually stipulated as an article of the peace? Did not France, when at war to dispute the accession of William III. to the throne of England, treat with him as king, and was not the recognition of his title also made one of the conditions of peace? Still, however, he would admit that withdrawing our minister or not sending another was not a just cause of war on the part of France; but could it be denied that to treat one nation in a manner different from others was a symptom of hostility? The recalling of ministers was certainly once considered as an indication of war, for the commercial treaty provided for a case where no war was declared but by such recall.

Mr. Fox said that none of the alleged grounds in the French declaration could be more absurd than that the circulation of their assignats was prohibited in this country; for that was purely a measure of internal regulation, as much as it would be to prohibit the circulation of paper issued among ourselves that perhaps stood on a much surer capital. But even here we were not quite impartial; for although that paper was called worth nothing which at present brought fourteenpence-halfpenny for half-a-crown, the paper created by that gigantic act of swindling, the assignats issued by the leaders of the combined armies, were not certainly worth more, but we had not thought it necessary to forbid the circulation of them; we had not prohibited the circulation of American paper even during the war, nor was it at all necessary; such paper wanted no prohibition. We had the right to prohibit it if we pleased, but he did not like assigning one reason for a thing when we evidently acted from another. The prohibiting the exportation of foreign corn to French ports while it was free to other countries, it was said, 'arose from preceding circumstances: and according to these circumstances it might be a justifiable or unjustifiable act of hostility, but it was an act of hostility so severe that the circumstances which justified it would have justified a war, and no such circumstances, as he had already proved, could be shown.

The alien bill was not a just cause of war, but it was a violation of the commercial treaty, both in the letter and the spirit. The right honourable gentleman said that the French had made regulations in their own country by which the treaty had been already completely broken and at an end. But did he complain of those regulations, for it was expressly provided by the treaty itself that no violation should put an end to it till complaint was made and redress refused. But here lay the important difference. The French made no regulations that put aliens on a different footing from Frenchmen. They made general regulations of safety and police, as every nation had a right to do. We made regulations affecting aliens only, confessed to be more particularly intended to apply to Frenchmen. It was admitted that the French desired an explanation of these regulations, and that an explanation was refused them. By us, therefore, and not by the French, was the commercial treaty broken.

Our sending a squadron to the Scheldt they complained of as an injury. And here the right honourable gentleman introduced the popular topic of their charming operations in Belgium; the disturbance of which they thought themselves entitled to resent as an aggression. He was as little disposed to defend their operations in Belgium as the right honourable gentleman, although he saw not for what purpose they were here alluded to, unless to inflame the passions and mislead the judgment; but if by that squadron we had disturbed them in their operations of war against the emperor, which he admitted we had not done, they would have had just cause to complain. "Then," said the right honourable gentleman, "they complain of our conduct on the afflicting news of the murder of their king; what, shall we not grieve for the untimely fate of an innocent monarch most cruelly put to death by his own subjects? Shall we not be permitted to testify our sorrow and abhorrence on an event that outrages every principle of justice and shocks every feeling of humanity?" Of that event he should never speak but with grief and detestation. But was the expression of our sorrow all? Was not the atrocious event made the subject of a message from his majesty to both Houses of Parliament? And now he would ask the few more candid men, who owned that they thought this event alone a sufficient cause of war, what end could be gained by further negotiation with Chauvelin, with Maret or Dumourier? Did ministers mean to barter the blood of this ill-fated monarch for any of the points in dispute; to say the evacuation of Brabant shall atone for so much, the evacuation of Savoy for so much



more? Of this he would accuse no man; but, on their principle, when the crime was committed negotiation must cease. He agreed, however, with the right honourable gentleman, and he was glad to hear him say so, that this crime was no cause of war; but if it were admitted to be so, it was surely not decent that the subject of war should never be even mentioned without reverting to the death of the king. When he proposed sending an ambassador to France, "What!" said the right honourable gentleman, "send an ambassador to men that are trying their king!" If we had sent an ambassador, even then; had our conduct towards the French been more candid and conciliating, the fatal issue of that trial might have been prevented. "But," said the right honourable gentleman, "we negotiated unofficially." The importance to any wise purpose of this distinction between official and unofficial negotiation, of this bartering instead of selling, he could never understand; but even to this mode of negotiating the dismissal of M. Chauvelin put an end. But M. Chauvelin, it was said, went away the very day after he received the order, although he might have stayed eight days and negotiated all the while! Was it so extraordinary a thing that a man of honour, receiving such an order, should not choose to run the risk of insult by staying the full time allowed him; or could he imagine that his ready compliance with such an order would be considered as an offence? When M. Chauvelin went away and M. Maret did not think himself authorised to negotiate, ministers sent a message to Lord Auckland to negotiate with General Dumourier, which reached him too late. Admitting this to be a proof of their wish to negotiate while negotiation was practicable, what was their conduct from the opening of the session? If he or any of his friends proposed to negotiate—"Negotiate!" they exclaimed, "we are already at war." Now it appeared that they did negotiate with unaccredited agents, although the secretary of state had said that such a negotiation was not compatible with his belief; and, last of all (strange conduct for lovers of peace!), they ordered to quit the country the only person with whom they could negotiate in their unofficial way. He was happy to see the right honourable gentleman so much ashamed of this mutilated farce of negotiation, as to be glad to piece it out with Lord Auckland and General Dumourier. Then was asked the miserable question, "What interest have ministers in promoting a war if, as it has been said, the ministers who begin war in this country are never allowed to conclude it?" Admitting this to be true, for which he saw no good reason, then surely they who

endeavoured to avert a war ought to be allowed some credit for the purity of their motives. But ministers never opened a fair communication on the points in dispute with France. They acted like men afraid of asking satisfaction, for fear that it should be granted—of stating the specific causes of war, lest they should lose the pretext.

The right honourable gentleman said we had received insults that ought not to have been borne for twenty-four hours. These were magnanimous words. In the affair of Nootka Sound the aggression by Spain was as direct and unqualified as any that could be stated, and yet we had borne it for twenty-four days. Why was not the same course pursued now as then? He was now called upon, as a member of that House, to support his majesty in the war, for the war was begun, and he would do it; but he was not pledged to any of those crooked reasonings on which some gentlemen grounded their support of ministers, nor less bound to watch them, because, by their misconduct, we had been forced into a war, which both the dignity and the security of Great Britain would have been better consulted in avoiding. He was never sanguine as to the success of a war. It might be glorious to our army and our navy, and yet ruinous to the people. The event of the last campaign—*procul absit omen*—and the example of the American war had taught him that we might be compelled to make peace on terms less advantageous than could have been obtained without unsheathing the sword; and if this might be the consequence to us, the consequences to our ally, the Dutch, must be such as he would not suffer himself to anticipate. The ordering M. Chauvelin to depart the kingdom and the stopping the exportation of corn to France when exportation was allowed to other countries were acts of hostility and provocation on our part which did not allow us to say, as the proposed address said, that the war was an unprovoked aggression on the part of France. Truth and justice were preferable to high-sounding words, and therefore he should move an amendment containing nothing that was not strictly true, and in voting which the House might be unanimous.

Mr. Fox concluded with moving his amendment, as follows: "That we learn, with the utmost concern, that the assembly, who now exercise the powers of government in France, have directed the commission of acts of hostility against the persons and property of his majesty's subjects, and that they have actually declared war against his majesty and the United Provinces: that we humbly beg leave to assure his majesty

that his majesty's faithful Commons will exert themselves with the utmost zeal in the maintenance of the honour of his majesty's crown, and the vindication of the rights of his people; and nothing shall be wanting on their part that can contribute to that firm and effectual support which his majesty has so much reason to expect from a brave and loyal people in repelling every hostile attempt against this country, and in such other exertions as may be necessary to induce France to consent to such terms of pacification as may be consistent with the honour of his majesty's crown, the security of his allies, and the interests of his people."

Mr. Fox's amendment was rejected, and the address proposed by Mr. Pitt agreed to without a division.

## MR. FOX'S RESOLUTIONS AGAINST THE WAR WITH FRANCE

*February 18, 1793.*

THIS day, in pursuance of the notice he had given,

Mr. Fox rose. He said that he had delivered his sentiments so frequently on the several points included in his intended motion that the House could not expect him to add much that was new. Having been accused in the last debate with repeating the same things over and over, he should now content himself with referring to the opinions he had formerly delivered; and hoped that he should not be again reproached, in the same breath that reminded him of repetition, with failing to repeat any one of those opinions to whatever part of the subject it might relate. The present crisis was awful. He had done everything in his power to avert the calamity of war; and he did intend to have made one more attempt, if he had not been most unaccountably prevented by the failure of public business for a whole week. That opportunity was unfortunately lost. We were now actually engaged in war; and being so engaged, there could be no difference of opinion as to the necessity of supporting it with vigour. No want of disposition to support it could be imputed to him; for, in the debate on his majesty's message announcing that we were at war, he had moved an amendment to the address, as much pledging the House to a vigorous support of it as the address proposed by his majesty's ministers, and better calculated to ensure unanimity. But the more he felt himself bound to support the war, the more he felt himself bound to object to the measures which, as far as yet appeared, had unnecessarily led to it.

The necessity of the war might be defended on two principles: first, the *malus animus*, or general bad disposition of the French towards this country; the crimes they have committed among themselves; the systems they have endeavoured to establish, if systems they might be called; in short, the internal government of their country. On this principle, there were few indeed that would venture to defend it: and this being disavowed as the cause of war by his majesty's ministers, it was unnecessary for

him to dwell upon it. Secondly, that various things have been done by the French, manifestly extending beyond their own country, and affecting the interests of us and our allies, for which, unless satisfaction was given, we must enforce satisfaction by arms. This he considered as the only principle on which the necessity of the war could be truly defended, and in this he was sure the great majority of the House and of the country were of the same opinion. His object was to record this in an address; and whatever objection there might be as to time or circumstances, could he obtain the sense of the House purely upon the principle, he should be very sanguine in his hopes of success. Such a record would be a guide to their conduct in the war, and a landmark on which to fix their attention for the attainment of peace. In examining the alleged cases of provocation he had maintained that they were all objects of negotiation, and such as, till satisfaction was explicitly demanded and refused, did not justify resorting to the last extremity. He had perhaps also said that ministers did not appear to have pursued the course which was naturally to be expected from their professions. He did not mean to charge them with adopting one principle for debate and another for action; but he thought they had suffered themselves to be imposed upon and misled by those who wished to go to war with France on account of her internal government, and therefore took all occasions of representing the French as utterly and irreconcilably hostile to this country. It was always fair to compare the conduct of men in any particular instance with their conduct on other occasions. If the rights of neutral nations were now loudly held forth; if the danger to be apprehended from the aggrandisement of any power was magnified as the just cause of the present war; and if, on looking to another quarter, we saw the rights of Poland, of a neutral and independent nation, openly trampled upon, its territory invaded, and all this for the manifest aggrandisement of other powers, and no war declared or menaced, not even a remonstrance interposed—for if any had been interposed it was yet a secret—could we be blamed for suspecting that the pretended was not the real object of the present war—that what we were not told was in fact the object, and what we were told only the colour and pretext?

The war, however, be the real cause what it might, would be much less calamitous to this country if, in the prosecution of it, we could do without allying ourselves with those who had made war on France for the avowed purpose of interfering in her

internal government; if we could avoid entering into engagements that might fetter us in our negotiations for peace; since negotiation must be the issue of every war that was not a war of absolute conquest, if we should shun the disgrace of becoming parties with those who in first attempting to invade France, and some of them in since invading Poland, had violated all the rights of nations, all the principles of justice and of honour.

On the first principle he had already stated, as one of two on which it might be attempted to justify the necessity of the present war, as it was most studiously disclaimed by ministers, and all but a very few members of that House, it was unnecessary for him to say anything. On the second he had said that the alleged causes of complaint were not causes of war previous to negotiation, and on this point his opinions were not new, as they had formerly been called, but such as he had always entertained from the first moment of his forming opinions upon such subjects; neither were they singular. He had since looked into the writers on the law of nations, and by all the most approved it was laid down as an axiom that injuries, be they what they may, are not the just cause of war till reparation and satisfaction have been fairly and openly demanded and evaded or refused. Some of them even went so far as to say that reparation and satisfaction ought to be demanded, both previous and subsequent to the declaration of war, in order to make that war just.

Our causes of complaint against France were, first, the attempt to open the navigation of the Scheldt; second, the decree of the 19th of November, supposed to be directed against the peace of other nations; third, the extension of their territory by conquest. The first of these was obviously and confessedly an object of negotiation. The second was also to be accommodated by negotiation; because an explanation that they did not mean what we understood by it, and a stipulation that it should not be acted upon in the sense in which we understood it, was all that could be obtained even by war. The third was somewhat more difficult, for it involved in it the evacuation of the countries conquered, and security that they should in no sense be annexed to France; and no such security could, perhaps, at present be devised. But if we were aware of this; if we saw that during the war the French are engaged in with other powers they had no such security to offer; if we knew that we were asking what could not be given, the whole of our pretended negotiation, such as it had been, was a farce and a delusion; not an honest endeavour to preserve the blessings of peace, but a fraudulent

expedient to throw dust in the eyes of the people of this country in order that they might be hurried blindly into a war. The more he attended to the printed correspondence, the oftener he read Lord Grenville's letter to M. Chauvelin, so repeatedly alluded to, the more convinced he was how extremely deficient we had been in communicating the terms on which we thought peace might be maintained. We told them they must keep within their own territory; but how were they to do this when attacked by two armies that retired out of their territory only to repair the losses of their first miscarriage and prepare for a fresh irruption? When to this studied concealment of terms were added the haughty language of all our communications, and the difficulties thrown in the way of all negotiation, we must surely admit that it was not easy for the French to know with what we would be satisfied, nor to discover on what terms our amity (not our alliance, for that he had never suggested, though the imputation had been boldly made) could be conciliated. When to all these he added the language held in that House by ministers, although he by no means admitted that speeches in that House were to be sifted for causes of war by foreign powers any more than speeches in the French convention by us; and last of all, the paper transmitted by Lord Auckland at the Hague to the States General—a paper which, for the contempt and ridicule it expressed of the French, stood unparalleled in diplomatic history—a paper in which the whole of them, without distinction, who had been in the exercise of power since the commencement of the Revolution, were styled “a set of wretches investing themselves with the title of philosophers, and presuming in the dream of their vanity to think themselves capable of establishing a new order of society,” etc. How could we hope the French, who were thus wantonly insulted, to expect that anything would be considered as satisfactory, or any pledge a sufficient security? Let the House compare Lord Auckland's language at the Hague with the pacific conduct of ministers at home, as represented by themselves. While they were trying every means to conciliate; while with moderation to an excess which they could not help thinking culpable they were publicly ordering M. Chauvelin to quit the kingdom within eight days, but privately telling him that he might stay and negotiate; while they were waiting for propositions from M. Maret which M. Maret did not make; while they were sending instructions to Lord Auckland to negotiate with General Dumourier, Lord Auckland was writing that silly and insulting paper by their

instructions; for if he had written such a paper without instructions, he was very unfit for his situation, and must have been instantly recalled. Thus while, as they pretended, they were courting peace, they were using every manœuvre to provoke war. For these reasons he should move that ministers had not employed proper means for preserving peace without sacrificing the honour or the safety of this country.

He came next to consider their conduct with respect to Poland. He had formerly said that he wished not to speak harshly of foreign princes in that House, although the period had not long since passed when it was thought perfectly allowable to talk of the Empress of Russia as a princess of insatiable ambition, and of the late emperor as a prince too faithless to be relied upon. But when he spoke of the King of Prussia, he desired to be understood as speaking of the cabinet of the court of Berlin, whose conduct he was as free to criticise as other gentlemen the conduct of the executive council of France. In May 1791 a revolution took place in Poland on the suggestion, certainly with the concurrence, of the King of Prussia; and, as was pretty generally imagined, although not authentically known, with the court of London. By a despatch to his minister at Warsaw, the King of Prussia expressed the lively interest which he had always taken in the happiness of Poland, a confirmation of her new constitution, and his approbation of the choice of the Elector of Saxony and his descendants to fill the throne of Poland, made hereditary by the new order of things, after the death of the reigning king. In 1792 the Empress of Russia, without the least plausible pretext but this change in the internal government of the country, invaded Poland. Poland called upon the King of Prussia, with whose express approbation this change had been effected, for the stipulated succours of an existing treaty of alliance. He replied that, the state of things being entirely changed since that alliance, and the present conjuncture brought on by the revolution of May 1791, posterior to his treaty, it did not become him to give Poland any assistance, unless, indeed, she chose to retrace all the steps of that revolution, and then he would interpose his good offices both with Russia and the emperor to reconcile the different interests. The different interests of foreign powers in the internal government of a free and independent nation! It was singular that ministers should be so keen to mark and stigmatise all the inconsistencies of the French with their former declarations, which had been too great and too many, and yet could see without



emotion such inconsistency, not to say perfidy, as this conduct exhibited. He was not the defender of the gross departures which had been made by the French from their own principles; but if we thought it unsafe to treat with them because of their perfidy, we had little inducement to unite with the King of Prussia, who had violated not only principles but an express treaty in a more particular and pointed manner than they had yet had an opportunity of doing. Among the powers at war, or likely to be at war with France, there was no great option of good faith. But the French, it was said, violated their principles for the sake of robbery and rapine, to seize on territory and plunder property. Let us look again for a moment to the King of Prussia.

In 1792 he limited the cause of war against Poland by Russia to the new constitution, which he himself had approved and promised to defend. But if once this obnoxious constitution was completely subverted, and that excellent old republic (for these crowned heads were great republicans when it suited their convenience) which had for ages constituted the happiness of Poland re-established on its ancient basis, he would interpose his good offices to conciliate the different interests and restore peace. What, then, prevented him from interposing his good offices? Was not the new constitution completely subverted? Did not the Russian troops succeed in overrunning Poland? Were they not in possession of the whole country? And had not the Empress of Russia been able to restore the excellent old republic? But if she was satisfied with her success in this respect, not so the King of Prussia. He was a critic in principles. When he approved of their revolution, the principles of the Poles were unexceptionable; when they were attempting a brave but unsuccessful resistance to a more powerful adversary, their principles were not dangerous; but when they were overpowered by superior force, when they had laid down their arms and submitted to their conqueror, when their whole country was possessed by a foreign army, then he discovered that they had French principles among them, subversive of all government and destructive of all society. And how did he cure them of these abominable principles? Oh! by an admirable remedy!—invading their country and taking possession of their towns. Are they tainted with Jacobinism? Hew down the gates of Thorn, and march in the Prussian troops. Do they deny that they entertain such principles? Seize upon Dantzic and annex it to the dominions of Prussia. Now, did not this seizure and

spoil of Poland tend to the aggrandisement of the powers by whom it was perpetrated? Was it not a greater and more contemptuous violation of the law of nations than the French had yet been guilty of? Most undoubtedly it was. Had we opposed it? Had we remonstrated against it? If ministers had any such remonstrances to show, they would produce them in due time, and the House would judge of them; but while none were produced, or even mentioned, he must presume that none had been made. The invasion of Poland had this material aggravation, that the powers who invaded were not themselves attacked at the time. They had not the excuse of the French to plead, that they did it in a paroxysm of fear and danger, circumstances that prompt nations as well as individuals to many acts of impolicy and injustice. The King of Prussia first connives at or consents to the invasion of Poland, which he was bound by treaty to defend. Next he attempts an unprovoked invasion of France and is foiled. How does he revenge the disgrace of his repulse? By increasing his army on the Rhine, by concentrating his forces for a fresh attack? No: he more gallantly turns round on defenceless Poland, and indemnifies himself for his losses by seizing on towns where he can meet with no resistance. It was not, therefore, on any general system of attention to the balance of Europe that ministers were acting, since, while they pretended to consider it as of the utmost importance in one case, they had suffered it to be most flagrantly infringed upon in another.

Having dwelt very copiously on the impolicy of viewing, without emotion, the dismemberment of Poland by three mighty powers, and considering the balance of power engaged only when France had gained the advantage, Mr. Fox deprecated, of all things, anything so infamous as our being supposed to be a party to this abominable confederacy of kings. In speaking thus freely, he hoped he should not be again accused of treating these monarchs with unnecessary severity. When public transactions were in question, it was the right of everyone under whose observation they came to treat them in the manner precisely that they appeared to him. He did so in treating of our own domestic concerns, and he would take the liberty of doing so whenever foreign politics were in any way connected with them. He had but little means of knowing the private characters, habits or dispositions of kings; and if he had, still, in discussions in that House, he could not fairly be represented as alluding to any other than the public proceedings that were conducted in

their name; so that when he spoke of the measures of the cabinet of Berlin, and censured them in the manner which he conceived them to deserve, the personal character of the King of Prussia was by no means implicated in that censure. He therefore lamented openly that England could be supposed to be in the least involved in that detested league. He could wish that if we had quarrels we should fight them by ourselves; or if we were to have allies, that we should keep our cause of quarrel completely separated from theirs, and, without intermeddling with the internal concerns of the French republic, not burden ourselves with any stipulations which should prevent us at any time from making a separate peace without the concurrence or approbation of those sovereigns.

Mr. Fox concluded with moving the following resolutions:

1. "That it is not for the honour or interest of Great Britain to make war upon France on account of the internal circumstances of that country, for the purpose either of suppressing or punishing any opinions and principles, however pernicious in their tendency, which may prevail there, or of establishing among the French people any particular form of government.

2. "That the particular complaints which have been stated against the conduct of the French government are not of a nature to justify war in the first instance without having attempted to obtain redress by negotiation.

3. "That it appears to this House that in the late negotiation between his majesty's ministers and the agents of the French government the said ministers did not take such measures as were likely to procure redress without a rupture, for the grievances of which they complained; and particularly that they never stated distinctly to the French government any terms and conditions, the accession to which, on the part of France, would induce his majesty to persevere in a system of neutrality.

4. "That it does not appear that the security of Europe and the rights of independent nations, which have been stated as grounds of war against France, have been attended to by his majesty's ministers in the case of Poland, in the invasion of which unhappy country, both in the last year and more recently, the most open contempt of the law of nations and the most unjustifiable spirit of aggrandisement has been manifested, without having produced, as far as appears to this House, any remonstrance from his majesty's ministers.

5. "That it is the duty of his majesty's ministers, in the present crisis, to advise his majesty against entering into engagements which may prevent Great Britain from making a separate peace whenever the interests of his majesty and his people may render such a measure advisable, or which may countenance an opinion in Europe that his majesty is acting in concert with other powers for the unjustifiable purpose of compelling the people of France to submit to a form of government not approved by that nation."

These resolutions were supported by Mr. Grey, Mr. Adam, Mr. Jekyll, Major Maitland, Mr. Lambton, Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Smith; and opposed by Mr. Burke, Mr. Jenkinson, Mr. Powys, Sir Richard Hill, Sir Francis Basset, Sir George Cornwall, Sir Henry Hoghton and Mr. Windham. After which,

Mr. Fox rose to reply. He began with adverting to what had fallen from Mr. Powys. That right honourable gentleman, who had lately chosen to distinguish himself by very particular attacks upon him, had styled him an advocate for France. If the right honourable gentleman meant an advocate for what was just and right, so far he would allow himself to come under the description: but if he meant that he entered into the partialities and interests of an advocate, he begged to disclaim the character. The phrase was ambiguous, and the right honourable gentleman, in applying it, knew that it would, and perhaps intended that it should, be taken up by the public in the most invidious point of view. That right honourable gentleman had said that he rejoiced that the sense of the House was that night decidedly to be taken. If anything could deter him from taking, as he proposed, the sense of the House, it was this mode of invitation, which was neither decent nor parliamentary. The right which had lately been insisted upon of a majority to know who were those who opposed them was inconsistent with the usage and privileges of parliament. Mr. Fox next adverted to what a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke) had alleged, that, according to his mode of reasoning, everything which had happened in France was just, and everything done in opposition to them otherwise; because he had said that the French were justifiable in declaring war against the Emperor of Germany, who had discovered hostile intentions towards them, he was therefore supposed to approve of all their proceedings in Brabant. Was this a fair conclusion? That right honourable gentleman had likewise stated that he had adopted new principles of reasoning, and that it was new to state arguments against the country. Now, the arguments which he had stated were directed against ministers. And was it to be understood that whenever ministers were blamed the country was censured? Were we, from our detestation of French republicanism, come to that pitch of triple-refined despotism that to arraign the conduct of ministers was to be represented as an attack upon the country? In that case it would be better at once to shut the doors of that House and dispense with the form of deliberating when the substance was destroyed. It would be better, when a war was declared, to give up at once all

the free part of the constitution and to leave everything to the absolute and arbitrary decision of ministers. But had the right honourable gentleman always acted upon the principle which he now wished to establish? Had he not, in 1778, thought proper to arraign the conduct of ministers while the country was engaged in a war? There was another point on which he wished to touch. Ministers whom, on the present occasion, the right honourable gentleman thought proper to support, had conceived it proper to make attempts to treat with the French. Why, then, should they escape the right honourable gentleman's censure while he imputed as so great a crime to opposition the very wish to treat with that nation? Poland, it had been said, was a more remote object; but what sort of political morality was that which represented an object as less interesting in proportion as it was more remote? Were all the charges of horror to be heaped upon the French with a view of exciting indignation against them; and was the conduct of the court of Berlin, which was still worse, to be passed entirely by? Were we to deal out our invectives in so large a proportion against the French while, with respect to the court of Berlin, we abstained from the smallest degree of censure? In that case political morality, which had never been rated high in the opinions of men, would sink very low indeed! He considered high rank or situation, so far from being an extenuation, as affording an aggravation of the offence. Much had been said about treating with the present executive council of France. He would only remark that in every country you must treat with those who have a power, unless you are bent on views of extirpation. Much, likewise, had been said of the influence of France. Was the influence of France so formidable, and was the influence of Austria and Prussia nothing?—an influence which had been that evening stated to have completely shut us out from the republic of Europe, and to have deprived us of the means of saving Poland, however much we might have been inclined. An honourable gentleman had stated his motion to be insidious, and the reason which he had assigned was that it partly assumed what had not been admitted in that House, and particularly misstated what had. Now, he would inform that honourable gentleman that his motion had not the smallest connection with anything that had been stated in that House, nor even could admit of the most distant allusion thereto. It had been asked how his motion could have any tendency to bring about a peace? An honourable gentleman on the other side of the House, with the candour of youth, had admitted

that nothing could more directly lead to peace than a precise ground being stated for the war. If the nature of the reparation which we desired was specified, the object was then precise and, when it was obtained, war was at an end. But if his motion was not adopted, and if gentlemen went away with a doubt of the object which was aimed at by the war, it could not then be known to what length or under what pretences the war might be protracted. In the course of the debate one of these pretences was that the conduct of the court of Berlin with respect to Poland had not been attempted to be vindicated. If Brissot was to be the object of so much invective, was the court of Berlin to be exempted from censure? The more elevated the situation from which crimes proceeded, the more were they to be reprobated, the more pernicious was their example, and the more extensive the mischief with which they were attended. That a high situation should procure oblivion or impunity for crimes was a maxim which no just, generous or magnanimous mind would readily admit. He was not acquainted with M. Brissot, whom a right honourable gentleman had styled the prince of pickpockets, but he always understood that any objections stated to his character arose only from his public conduct. With respect to M. Chauvelin, he would likewise suggest to that right hon. gentleman to be cautious in admitting accounts as ground for his invective which came from persons heated with the most violent personal enmity and political animosity.

Mr. Fox said he had now finished his task, and could with confidence say *liberavi animam meam*. He had done all that he could do. He had been told that the part he had taken was not popular. No man was more desirous of popularity than he was; no man would make more just sacrifices to obtain it. If the part which a regard to the interests of the country obliged him to take was not popular, it was not his duty to be influenced by that consideration. We had now got into a war; and how best to put an end to that war was the object which demanded their attention. It was their business, treading the old constitutional ground, to come forward boldly with their opinions in proportion to the importance of the crisis and the dangers of the country, and not to be deterred by the suggestions of timidity or by menaces of unpopularity. It gave him satisfaction that no one had ventured to come forward to give a negative to his motion, even amidst the general exultation which prevailed among the members of that House with respect to a war; but that it was to be got rid of by the previous question. He feared

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—he by no means wished—that this exultation in its event would have a termination similar to that which had been so emphatically described by Tacitus, “*Spe læta, tractatu dura, eventu tristia.*”

Mr. Jenkinson having moved the previous question on Mr. Fox's motion, the House divided:

<i>Tellers</i>			<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS	{ Mr. Adam Mr. Lambton }	44.—	NOES	{ Mr. Powys Mr. Jenkinson }
				270.

So it passed in the negative.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO  
EXPRESS DISPLEASURE AT LORD AUCKLAND'S  
MEMORIAL TO THE STATES GENERAL

*April 25, 1793.*

On the 18th of April Mr. Sheridan moved for a copy of a memorial, dated the 5th of April, and presented to the States General by the British and Imperial ministers. The said memorial being produced on the 25th, Mr. Sheridan, after an eloquent speech of considerable length, moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to express to his majesty the displeasure of this House at a certain memorial, dated the 5th of April, 1793, presented to the States General of the United Provinces, signed by the right honourable Lord Auckland, his majesty's minister at the Hague, the said memorial containing a declaration of the following tenor: 'Some of these detestable regicides' (meaning by this expression the commissioners of the national convention of France, delivered to Prince Cobourg by General Dumourier) 'are now in such a situation that they can be subjected to the sword of the law. The rest are still in the midst of a people whom they have plunged into an abyss of evils, and for whom famine, anarchy and civil war are about to prepare new calamities. In short, everything that we see happen induces us to consider as not far distant the end of these wretches, whose madness and atrocities have filled with horror and indignation all those who respect the principles of religion, morality and humanity. The undersigned, therefore, submit to the enlightened judgment and wisdom of your high mightinesses; whether it would not be proper to employ all the means in your power to prohibit from entering your dominions in Europe or your colonies all those members of the assembly styling itself the National Convention, or of the pretended executive council, who were directly or indirectly concerned in the said crime; and if they should be discovered and arrested, to deliver them up to justice, that they may serve as a lesson and example to mankind.'

"To acquaint his majesty of the sense of this House that the said minister, in making this declaration, has departed from the principles upon which this House was induced to concur in the measures necessary for the support of the war in which the British nation is at present unfortunately engaged, and has announced an intention on the part of Great Britain inconsistent with the repeated assurances given by his majesty, that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of France; and for which declaration this House cannot easily be brought to believe that the said minister derived any authority from his majesty's instructions:

"Humbly to beseech his majesty that so much of the said



memorial as contains the declaration above recited may be publicly disavowed by his majesty, as containing matter inconsistent with the wisdom and humanity which at all times have distinguished the British nation, and derogatory to the dignity of the crown of this realm, by avowing an intention to interpose in the internal affairs of France, which his majesty has, in so many positive declarations, disclaimed, and mingling purposes of vengeance with those objects of defence and security to ourselves and our allies, which his majesty's ministers have so often declared to be the sole object of the present war.

"To represent to his majesty that this House has already expressed its abhorrence of the acts alluded to in the above declaration; and that as neither this, nor any other foreign state, can claim any cognisance or jurisdiction respecting that act, the only tendency of menaces against the persons concerned in the perpetration of it is to reduce this country to the ruinous alternative of carrying on war for the subversion of the present government of France, or of obtaining peace by an ignominious negotiation with the very government whom we have thus insulted and stigmatised.

"That these threats must tend to give to the hostilities with which Europe is now afflicted a peculiar barbarism and ferocity, by provoking and reviving a system of retaliation and bloodshed which the experience of its destructive tendency, as well as a sense of honour, humanity and religion, have combined to banish from the practice of civilised war.

"And finally, to represent to his majesty how deeply the reputation of his majesty's counsels is interested in disclaiming these unjustifiable and, we trust, unauthorised denunciations of vengeance, so destructive of all respect for the consistency, and of all confidence in the sincerity of the public acts of his ministers, and so manifestly tending at once to render the principle of the war unjust, the conduct of hostilities barbarous, and the attainment of honourable peace hopeless."

After Mr. Pitt had entered into an elaborate defence of Lord Auckland,

Mr. Fox said that the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer had attempted to defend the memorial on the only ground on which a defence could have been expected, namely, its want of any definite meaning. In his usual mode of alluding to past transactions in that House he had charged his honourable friend with putting off his motion for the purpose of taking new ground, although he knew that his honourable friend had put it off at the request of friends who wished to be present at the discussion, and who could not attend on the day for which he had first given notice. With respect to the motives and feelings which the right honourable gentleman had taken the trouble of imagining for his honourable friend in making this motion, his honourable friend could have but one motive, his sense of public

duty; and the noble lord whose conduct was the cause of it could excite no feeling but that of the most placid and tranquil nature. The right honourable gentleman had defended the memorial on the ground of its meaning nothing at all; but he had not ventured to say that it had no reference to the commissioners of the French convention put into the hands of the Austrians by Dumourier on the hopes entertained of Dumourier's plan. The memorial said that these commissioners were in a situation to be subjected to the sword of the law:—to what sword—of what law? To the sword of any law which those to whom they were delivered, not as prisoners, but hostages, might frame for their execution? If it meant to the sword of some law to be revived or established in France, why was not that qualification inserted in it? Lord Auckland's communication to the States General in September had never received the sanction of the House, and therefore the House would be guilty of no inconsistency in condemning it. The purport of that communication was simply that if any act then generally apprehended and universally deprecated should be committed, the perpetrators of it would not be sheltered from the laws of their country in his majesty's dominions. But what did my Lord Auckland? He, not as a measure of prevention, not as a warning to deter, but on a principle of vengeance obviously tending to provoke retaliation and, in the very first instance, to endanger the lives of the survivors of the royal family of France, suggested to subject to the sword of the law persons given as hostages for their safety.

What was the motive of his honourable friend in moving to censure this conduct? To obtain the reprobation of the House against making the war more bloody and the contest more cruel. If the conduct of the French to Frenchmen had excited abhorrence, if they had shown a disposition unjustly and wantonly to shed blood, now was the time for the House to show detestation of their disposition and their practice by expressing their detestation of this memorial. Another motive for his honourable friend's motion was to obtain a clear and explicit declaration of the object of the war. The right honourable gentleman had said that this was wholly unconnected with the internal government of France; but at the same time he expressed a wish that, in making peace, we might not have to treat with those persons who now exercised the powers of government in that country. The real object, according to the right honourable gentleman, was to obtain an indemnification for their unjust aggression, and security for the peace of Europe in future. From this he

learned that indemnification and security might, in the contemplation of the right honourable gentleman, be gained from those "malheureux," whether wretches or unhappy persons; for to drive them from the government was not an object but a wish. With whom, then, when the hour of negotiation came, might we have to treat? With those very men whom, in our memorials and public acts, we were now stigmatising with every vilifying and opprobrious epithet. Hard words he had always thought imprudent; more especially when applied to persons of whom it was possible we might afterwards have occasion to speak in very different terms. With those very persons the right honourable gentleman had treated through M. Chauvelin, and had boasted of sending instructions to Lord Auckland to treat with them, even after the murder of the king. Would the right honourable gentleman now refuse to treat with them if an occasion consistent with the avowed object of the war should offer? No such declaration would he venture to make. Lord Auckland, then, if he should be continued in his present situation, might be, from local circumstances, the most convenient person to employ to treat with them. But what would the Frenchman say? Supposing him to forget all the hard words, all the odious terms formerly applied to him, he would very naturally say, What! treat with Lord Auckland? No; he has declared he will hang me if he can catch me, and therefore I will not put myself in his power. The answer to all this was that the paper was only the too sanguine effusion of imaginary success, and meant only that when a tribunal should be established in France agreeably to the fancy of the combined powers, the members of the convention and the executive council would be subjected to the sword of the law. The memorial ought to have said so; for it was giving but little encouragement to those now in the exercise of government in France to think of negotiation to tell them that to get hold of them, or their agents, and to hang them was one and the same thing.

His honourable friend had introduced the conduct of Russia, Prussia and the emperor, which the right honourable gentleman has treated as having no connection with the subject. Was it, indeed, so immaterial? If we were engaged in a war on the usual principles of war, the cause ascertained and the object definite, we might indeed avail ourselves of the assistance of powers for the attainment of that object whose views were very different from our own. But if, as the memorial implied, we were at war with persons, not with the nation, and had thrown away the

scabhard, it was of great importance to consider whether or not their object was the same as ours; whether, while our aim was reparation and security, theirs was not aggrandisement; whether, while we sought only to remove certain persons from the government of France, they did not look to the partition? Of crowned heads it was always his practice to speak with respect; but the actions of their cabinets were fair matter of discussion. Under this qualification he had no difficulty in saying that the late conduct of Russia and Prussia was ten thousand times more reprehensible than any part of the conduct of France towards other nations. Of the former partition of Poland he had never spoken but in terms of reprobation; but the present was more odious than the former, inasmuch as it was marked by the most flagrant breach of faith and violation of the most solemn declarations. Prussia, it was notorious, had encouraged the revolution in Poland, and expressed the most decided approbation of seating the family of Saxony on the hereditary throne. That very revolution was now made the pretext for entering Poland, and forcibly seizing on Dantzic and Thorn. Russia entered Poland, declaring that her only object was to restore the republic which the revolution had subverted; and having gained possession of the country, in contempt of all her former declarations, she proceeded to divide it with Prussia and the emperor.

Strong, however, as was his reprobation of such conduct, he had never said that we ought on that account to reject a useful alliance with either of those powers; but that while we professed to be fighting against one species of tyranny, we ought to be careful not to set up another tyranny more dangerous. What was the answer to this? Declamation against the horrid tendency of French principles, the subversion of all order, and the introduction of anarchy. When we argued against principles, let us not confine our view to the mischief they might occasion, but consider also the probability of their being established. Were three or four maniacs to escape from Bedlam and take possession of a house, the mischief they would do in it would probably be much greater than that of as many robbers; but people knew the improbability of their getting into that situation, and very properly guarded their houses, not against madmen from Bedlam, but against robbers. Just so was it with the probability of French principles gaining the ascendancy. Anarchy, if it could be introduced into other nations, was in its nature temporary—despotism, we knew by sad experience to

be lasting; the present emperor was but little tried: but if, as generally happened, the systems of cabinets were more to be attended to than the characters of princes, we had seen the cabinet of Vienna repeatedly promising to the Austrian Netherlands the restoration of their ancient constitution, and as often refusing to fulfil its promise; we had seen the late emperor promise that restoration under our guarantee as the price of their return to allegiance; we had seen him refuse it when he again got possession; we had seen Lord Auckland protest against the refusal, and afterwards most shamefully accede to it; and we had seen the governors of the Netherlands, making their escape by one gate while the French were entering at another, declare the restoration of that constitution; as if the moment when they were compelled to resign possession was the only fit moment for restoring the rights of those whom they were sent to govern.

If in all this there were any symptoms of good faith to give us confidence, the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg's proclamations were sufficient to destroy it all. In the conduct of the three courts we should find all the crimes of France towards other nations committed in a more unjustifiable manner. But the right honourable gentleman said these were only topics to induce us to refuse the assistance of those courts. If the object of the war were distinct, we might, indeed, accept of their assistance with safety; but, while all was doubt and uncertainty, how could we pretend to know what were their views, or what they expected as the price of their assistance? We were now acting in concert with the dividers of Poland. We ourselves were the dividers of Poland; for, while we were courting them to aid us in a war against French principles, we furnished them with the pretext and afforded them the opportunity of dividing Poland. We were the guarantees of Dantzic, of which Prussia, our ally, had taken possession. Did we not say, when the French attempted to open the Scheldt, that we were the guarantees of the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt to the Dutch?

mutato nomine, de te  
Fabula narratur.

Prussia was the other guarantee; but regarded guarantees as little as the French, when Dantzic and Thorn were to be annexed to his territories. What was this but teaching the people that the professions of courts were mere delusions—that the pretext for the war was the danger from French power and French

principles, but the cause to gratify the ambition of other powers? How were we ever to make peace when we were not agreed upon the terms with those who assisted us in the war? Regard for the Christian religion was one of the reasons alleged for dividing Poland; regard for the Christian religion might be alleged for dividing France. He did not understand that we paid any subsidies, and in one point of view he was sorry for it. We should then understand for what we had engaged. As the case stood at present, how did we know what Prussia or the emperor might require of us? As Russia had taken part of Poland, might not the emperor take a fancy to Bavaria and the Palatinate? And thus the difficulties of making peace become greater than those of carrying on the war? Add to this that if rumour or regard to ancient policy could be trusted, Spain would not consent to the dismemberment of France. Mr. Fox said he was the more strongly convinced of the observation he had made upon a former occasion, that in all these quarrels there was a material difference between the *ratio suasoria* and the *ratio justificata*, which were alternately to be substituted the one for the other as called for. If, as he feared, this war was undertaken against principles, let us look to the conduct of Germany, Russia and Prussia and, if the spirit of chivalry was so alive amongst us, see if there were no giants, no monsters, no principles against which we had better turn our arms. For his part, he had no hesitation in saying that though France had unhappily afforded many instances of atrocity, yet the invasion of last year, and which our present conduct seemed to justify, was the most gross violation of everything sacred which could exist between nation and nation, as striking at the root of the right which each must ever possess of internal legislation. The mode of getting out of this situation was by agreeing to the address censuring Lord Auckland, and thus convincing the other powers of Europe that we would not be parties to their plans for dividing kingdoms. It was, indeed, matter of great doubt whether or not peace for Europe could now be obtained for any great length of time. The encouragement we had given to the robbery of Poland might be expected to inflame the passions of avarice and ambition. There was, however, one nation, Spain, which had a common interest with us, and with which he wished to see a cordial union against the dangerous aggrandisement of the imperial courts and Prussia. All our victories in the present war had been obtained by their arms exclusively, and every victory gave fresh cause of jealousy. To agree to the address would have

another good effect. It would satisfy the people that the reason for the war and the pretext were the same; and that there was not one language for the House of Commons and another for the Hague. Upon these grounds he conceived the country under great obligations to his honourable friend for bringing forward the present motion, as tending to call forth from the minister a repetition of those causes and objects to which the nation had a right to look up for the commencement and continuance of the war. He therefore gave it his hearty approbation.

The House divided on Mr. Sheridan's motion:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
" YEAS	{ Mr. Sheridan Mr. Grey }	36.—NOES	{ Mr. Neville Mr. Jenkinson }

So it passed in the negative.

## MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE WITH FRANCE

*June 17, 1793.*

THE order of the day being read,

Mr. Fox rose to call the attention of the House to the motion respecting the war with France, of which he had given notice. He said he should not have troubled the House, nor presumed to have offered his sentiments upon the subject he ~~was~~ about to introduce, which related to the general situation of the country, if circumstances had not clearly required of him that he should do so. Before the prorogation of parliament it appeared to him absolutely necessary that some decisive step should be taken respecting the discontinuance of a war which had already been productive of the most serious calamities. If upon that day he neglected to recapitulate and enforce those arguments which he had formerly advanced; if upon that day he omitted to urge the impolicy of the war; if upon that day he passed over in silence the manifold evils with which the system of our confederacy was pregnant; he hoped that those who now heard him would not conceive that he had changed his opinion upon the measures which brought about this unhappy war. Such a conclusion would be unjust, and he trusted no gentleman would draw it. He trusted the House would feel that if he waived all these topics, it was because he did not consider them as necessary to the illustration of the arguments he had to submit on the present occasion. He should, therefore, for the sake of argument, and for the sake of argument only, grant that the present war was a just, prudent and necessary war, a war entered into for the interest of this country and for the general safety of Europe. This was the broadest way in which he could lay a foundation for argument; and upon principles so laid down he should state why he thought it necessary at the present time, and under the present circumstances, for that House to interfere and to give its opinion to the throne, in such an address as he should have the honour of moving. If there were any who thought that this might have a bad effect upon the public mind, all he could say was that on his part it would not be intentional, as he was of a different opinion.



He had always understood that the grounds of the present war on the part of Great Britain were principally these: first, the particular alliance we had with the Dutch, attacked as they were by the French; secondly, not only this alliance, which in point of good faith called upon us to act from a regard to our own honour, but also on account of the interest we ourselves had in the issue. There was another ground stated, and that might be divided into parts as, indeed, on former occasions it had been; he meant that which was stated upon the general footing of the aggrandisement of France, and the effect and operation of the spirit of their councils. These were the grounds upon which we undertook the present war. His object was now to show that upon none of these grounds could the war be continued. He knew he might, and perhaps he should be told, that we had been at considerable expense in this war already, and that we had met with considerable success in the prosecution of it hitherto; therefore gentlemen inclined to insist upon these points would urge that under such circumstances it was fair for us to say that we were entitled to indemnity for the expenses we had sustained, and security against future danger, or that if we had not these, the war should be followed up with vigour. That principle, as far as it regarded the situation of our allies, he did by no means deny; but the continuance of the present war for indemnity to ourselves and indemnity only, after the real object of the war was gained, could be maintained only upon prudential considerations. Now, taking it as a matter of prudence, he should wish to ask what could we promise to ourselves from the continuance of the present war? What was it that we proposed to gain? These were all the grounds he should have to submit to the House.

In the first place, therefore, he should apprehend from these premises that whatever sentiments of indignation the people of this country might feel with regard to some of the proceedings on the part of France (pretty generally the indignation was felt, and by none more than by himself), yet he believed it was not in the contemplation of the people of this country, at the commencement of the war, to insist on giving France its old absolute monarchy, or, indeed, to insist on giving it any form of government whatever, or to interfere with any form of government that might be found in that country. He thought he was stating nothing more than the general wish of the people of this country, and what they felt at the commencement of the war, that the object of it was not that of giving, or insisting on, any form of

government to France. He stated this point negatively, because it would tend to make the positive part which he should afterwards submit the more intelligible. We were not to revenge the death of the King of France, at least we were not to go to war for that purpose. Although he felt as much as any person in this country upon that melancholy occasion, and he believed that, in this country at least, it was an event unanimously lamented; yet it was not for this that we went to war. How far the indignation of the people had been roused upon that topic it was unnecessary for him to repeat; it was sufficient in the present instance for his purpose to say it was not the ground of our going to war, either insisted on by the most sanguine advocates for the measure, or by the still higher authority of the communication from the throne.

The object of the war avowedly was to preserve Holland as our ally and to prevent the aggrandisement of France, which was said to be formidable on account of the sentiments which appeared to actuate their councils. There was, indeed, another ground, which was that the French had declared war against us. That being admitted to its full extent would go only to the establishment of one principle—that of making the war a defensive war; by a defensive war he did not mean to describe the mode of carrying it on, for it must be carried on, as all mankind knew, by force of arms; but it was on that account merely a defensive war in principle, which ceased with the occasion that gave it birth. And if he were asked when was the time he would put an end to such a war, he would answer, when we could make our enemies desist from carrying on their operations against us; subject to the consideration of an indemnity, if indemnity could be obtained; always keeping in view that indemnity was also a point to be governed by considerations of prudence and discretion. If, therefore, we had no ground for suspecting that France had any further means of acting hostilely against us or any of our allies, we could not justify to ourselves the continuance of the war solely upon the ground that France had declared war against us. When we had put an end to the aggression, then was the time to put an end to the war so commenced. With respect to Holland, our ally, he must observe that the question whether Holland was now safe from any attack from France was easily answered; and he believed that every man in that House, and every man of intelligence throughout the country, knew the answer to be in the affirmative. But whether in the present state of affairs the future safety of our

allies, the Dutch, was to be secured by our pursuing the war in conjunction with the other combined powers was a question not easily answered in the same way. How far, if this war was countenanced by us, the general safety of Europe would be preserved was a topic he did not wish to decide upon, because it afforded, in his opinion, a prospect that could not be agreeable to any man who had the least regard for the principles of liberty—all he meant in this place was that the Dutch, as well as ourselves, were at this moment sufficiently fortified and guarded against any attack from France. Was there a man this day in the country who seriously thought that, with regard to Holland and to us, peace could not be made with France with perfect safety?

He came now to the consideration of the general state of Europe at this moment. We attacked France because our allies were attacked by her, and because we saw in the character and spirit of her councils views of her own aggrandisement. Was this spirit and were these views peculiar to France? Had we not witnessed the same spirit in other powers of Europe? Had not all parties in that House, had not all the people of this country, concurred in detesting the conduct of the present combined powers with regard to Poland? Was not that scene sufficiently infamous? Did it not exhibit sufficient tyranny, oppression and breach of faith? Could we conceal from ourselves the conduct of Russia and of Prussia upon that subject? Were we to partake of the infamy of that transaction? God forbid we should! Let us, then, ask ourselves, with all the indignation we naturally entertain against the conduct of France on many points, whether the conduct of the court of Berlin and the court of Petersburg in their invasion of Poland, and afterwards the partition of it, was not equal in infamy to anything that France was ever guilty of? Upon this part of the subject he had a few observations to make to some members of the House upon the alarm they expressed at the commencement of this session at the progress of the French. What, he asked, did these gentlemen now feel when reflecting on the conduct and progress of the Empress of Russia and the King of Prussia? Was this matter of alarm to any of these gentlemen? Alas! No. It seemed that nothing was now to be alarming but French principles. Such were the horrid effects of fear on account of these principles, and so far had it affected the Empress of Russia and the King of Prussia, that they had laid hold of Poland in the panic. He begged pardon of the House for introducing anything ludicrous upon so grave a subject; but a story which he remembered appeared to him so

apposite that he could not resist the temptation of reciting it: A person detected in the act of taking a watch out of the pocket of another, being accused of it, confessed the fact, but said in his defence that he had been struck with a panic, and in his fright he had laid hold of the first thing he could, which happened to be the gentleman's watch, which he conveyed into his pocket. If, in the present case, Poland was the first thing these great powers, Russia and Prussia, could lay hold of, such was the effect of these royal alarms, such the conduct of these panic-struck sovereigns, that in the spasms of their fear they could not quit their hold, and having each an equal right to retain what they had within their grip, most equitably agreed to divide the kingdom between them! Did gentlemen think themselves happy in seeing this mode adopted to resist French principles? Was this conduct less dangerous to Europe than that of the French? He knew many reasons why it was more dangerous. One was that such a combination of despots was carried on with more secrecy than in the wild state of a democracy was possible at any time. And here he wished to know what answer gentlemen would give him if he asked whether they thought that even if the French had been able to retain all they took, Flanders and Brabant, it would have been more dangerous to the general prosperity of Europe than this division of Poland? Or that now they were restored, and supposing them to be under the condition they stood in by the order of the Emperor Joseph, whether there was a man in that House of opinion that our safety required the continuance of this destructive war?

And now he must, however reluctantly, come to the present situation of this country. The desperate state of the disease might be judged of from the nature of the remedy which they had lately been called on to apply; and here he would desire them to ask every man whether peace at this time was not indispensably necessary for the safety of this country in a commercial point of view? Let them ask every man in the kingdom who had any commercial dealings whether the accounts he received from all parts of the kingdom did not call for a conclusion to this war? Let them ask every man possessed of the smallest information upon the subject whether he ever heard of a war more destructive to the commerce of the country than the present? Let them see whether almost every manufacturing town in the kingdom did not give melancholy proof of the truth of these reflections. Whether the town of Manchester, and others in its neighbourhood; whether Wiltshire and all the

West did not prove the same thing? Some, indeed, had imagined that the city of Norwich had escaped from the mischief. But he was perfectly sure that if his honourable friend (Mr. Windham), who was immediately connected with that city, should take an opportunity of speaking upon this subject, he would acknowledge the truth of these assertions, although he had reason to fear he would differ in the conclusion he would draw. Let them, however, look at the real state of affairs: let them acknowledge that a continuance of war might bring the greatest calamities upon us. Let them not ask themselves what indemnity they ought to have of France; but what France had it in her power to bestow? What Europe had to bestow upon Great Britain that would recompense her for the shock that might be given to her commerce by continuing the present war?

He knew there were many who maintained that the present war was not the cause of the present commercial embarrassments of this country; he did not agree with those opinions. But supposing them to be right, he would then say that, whatever was the cause of our distresses in that respect, we could not look with any rational hope of amending our condition without the advantages of peace; and he was ready to express his perfect conviction that peace must be had for our recovery. Taking this for granted, as he must, he would ask what it was that all Europe could give us by way of indemnity for our proceeding further in this war? What was it that we were now fighting for? For our religion? It was not attacked. For our constitution? It was perfectly secure. What if France was distracted, was that circumstance of benefit to us? What if we made law to-morrow for France? What if we exacted indemnity? What had she to give? What had Europe to give to Great Britain for the prosecution of the war? He said he saw no room for supposing that the House would not do him the justice to believe that he did not speak from any party warmth upon this subject. He thought, notwithstanding he had generally the misfortune to differ from the majority of the present House, that they would see upon this occasion the necessity of concurring with him in expressing an earnest disposition for the termination of the war; because all agreed in opinion that whenever the object of the war could be obtained the hour of peace would arrive. What stood now in the way of peace? We had no alliance with Austria upon this occasion, nor any in that respect with the King of Prussia. With regard to Holland, any proposition for peace must be acceptable to the Dutch. But an alliance with the Empress of

Russia had that day been laid upon the table; in that alliance there was an article he was sorry to see, by which we engaged not to lay down arms but by mutual consent; and by which we might be called upon to adopt the principles of the court of Petersburg, in the prosecution of the war: principles in themselves at all times very dangerous, but alarmingly so at this time, because we might be compelled to pursue the war until the objections of the empress were all removed. With respect to the treaty with the King of Sardinia, that was more direct and positive; but he should say no more upon these topics at this time, because that House had not yet adopted them. Another point remained.

Mr. Fox said he knew the difficulty which had been often started with respect to peace. Upon this a question had been asked, whether we were to treat with France in its present state? To which he answered—Yes. With him, or them, be he or they whom they might, we ought, and ultimately must treat, who had the government in their hands: of this he was sure. If the contrary was true: if we treated with them only on a plan of our own, as to a form of government, we must be at war with them until we had beaten them; and we should in that case fight with them until they should obtain a legally established government. Good God! what was there in their proceedings that made us look for an established government among them? What reason had we to expect that event to take place? When and how were we to enforce it? Let them suffer the penalties of their own injustice—let them suffer the miseries arising from their own confusion—why were the people of England to suffer because the people of France were unjust? Why was every man in England to be a sufferer because the people of France were in confusion, and that, too, when France had no power to annoy us, and when we could conclude peace with safety to ourselves and to our allies? If we were determined to say we would not make peace with the French until they had a form of government of which we should approve, that would amount to saying that we would dictate to them a form of government; and if that had been avowed at the beginning, he was confident the House would never have entered into the war at all; and although it was his majesty's undoubted prerogative to commence it of his own will, yet the House would have refused to pledge itself for supplies to carry it on. If he was asked with whom we could have signed a treaty of peace some time ago, he would answer with M. Le Brun. All those who had supported this war had

agreed that peace, if it could be obtained, was a desirable object; and all that had been said or done by the national convention, everything that had been said or done in the city of Paris, demonstrated this, that it had ever been the opinion of that people that a peace with this country was the most desirable of all objects for them to obtain. He owned, for his part, the necessity of this country being at peace with the French, and he was convinced that all the people of England would see it in the same light very soon, unless they were ready to say they would pay for the follies of the French. It was a new thing to hear that to be at peace with a people we must be pleased first with the form of their government. He knew it was not wise to treat in general with those whose power was unsettled. This applied to treaties of alliance; but when peace was the object this doctrine was not to be admitted, as otherwise we might be at war for ever.

He felt a considerable deference to others in speaking on parts of this subject now. From what he had seen some time ago, he knew there was a cry in that House for entering into this war; but he thought that if ever there was a period when one man spoke the opinion of every man in this country upon any subject, it was now when he said that peace was an object the most desirable of all others. He must say that every measure should now be taken to put an end to this ruinous war. An immediate termination of it was almost the universal desire of the people of this country. Whether it was the opinion of that House or not, he could not tell; but he believed that his opinion upon this occasion was, almost without exception, the opinion of the public. He did not advance this upon slight ground; he had very good authority for what he said, and he hoped it would be listened to with the attention which he was sure it deserved.

A report had gone abroad; how true it was he did not presume to determine, because he had no means of accurate information; but certainly a report prevailed, and he knew there were many who thought that some of the most efficient ministers of the crown, sensible of the distresses of the country and the absurdity of continuing the war, were at the present moment friends to peace; and since he had considered of making the motion with which he should conclude his address to the House some persons had told him that he was supported in his opinion upon this war by some persons high in his majesty's council. Be that as it might, he did not say he wished for the sanction of this or of that man; he hoped that whoever favoured that opinion would be emboldened to persist, and then he trusted the crown

would be advised in the cabinet to put an end to this war. If it should be so it would give him the most heartfelt satisfaction. He knew that the opinions of many in that House might be an argument for changing the opinions of some of the members of the cabinet. He therefore thought it possible that by diligence his object might be gained. He confessed that he so earnestly desired peace, and saw the policy of it so strongly, that if there was any one of the council of the king who wished for it, whatever situation that person held, and if he said he thought the continuance of this war dangerous and wished to put an end to it, such person for such a purpose should have his support; and he was in hopes that the motion he should make that night would strengthen that opinion. He was the more inclined to think that such would be the effect of it from the experience of the past. They all remembered the American war—a war during a long period, before the termination of which there was great reason to believe that not only the House of Commons and the people of this country, but also many of the efficient ministers of the crown, wished to put an end to it. Whether that was the case, as to the latter part, in the present instance he could not tell; but this he would say, that whenever any minister should stand forth and, regardless of the impression he should make upon the party on whose favour he might principally depend, avow his sentiments upon this subject—let it be the right honourable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Pitt)—he would gladly join with him upon that subject, and afford him all the aid in his power. The American war afforded an awful example to the people of this country, and he hoped we were not doomed to endure another such calamity. He must once more call upon the members of that House to exercise their own judgment, to look at the small possible advantage to be gained, and the almost inevitable ruin of pursuing this war, and then to act with courage, and put an end to this dangerous and destructive measure. He hoped and trusted they would so act; and if they did, he was confident he should give consolation to them by the measure he was now going to suggest. Mr. Fox then moved,

“ That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to lay before his majesty the humble representations of his faithful Commons on the present awful and momentous crisis; a duty which they feel themselves the more especially called upon to perform at this juncture, as a long and eventful period may probably elapse before his majesty can again have an opportunity of collecting, through their representations, the real sentiments and wishes of his people:

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Commons are bound to declare that they concurred in the measures necessary to carry on the present war for the objects of defence and security, and for those objects only:

"That any plan of aggrandisement, founded on the present distressed situation of France, much less any purpose of establishing among the French people any particular form of government, never would have had their concurrence or support:

"In expressing these their sentiments and opinions on entering into the present war, his majesty's faithful Commons are sensible that they are only repeating those benevolent declarations which true policy and a careful attention to the real interests of the British nation induced his majesty to use in his most gracious speech from the throne at the beginning of the present session of parliament, and in repeated messages to this House:

"To represent to his majesty that though his faithful Commons have the most perfect reliance on his majesty's sacred word and promise, solemnly pledged to this country and to Europe, not to interfere in the internal affairs of France, or to enter into the views and projects of other powers who, in the present war, may be actuated by motives far different from those which govern the conduct of his majesty, yet they feel it to be their indispensable duty to call his majesty's most serious attention to some of the circumstances which have occurred since the commencement of the present unfortunate contest:

"The French arms, which after a successful invasion of Brabant had threatened the security of his majesty's allies, the States General, have since been confined within their own territory, and are now occupied in defence of their frontier towns against the united forces of his majesty and his allies: the danger apprehended from the former conquests and aggrandisement of the French nation appears therefore to be no longer a subject of just uneasiness and alarm:

"Some of the powers engaged in the confederacy against France have, on the other hand, openly avowed, and successfully executed, plans of domination and conquest not less formidable to the general liberties of Europe. The rapacious and faithless dismemberment of the unhappy kingdom of Poland, without having produced, as far as it appears to this House, any remonstrance from his majesty's ministers, has excited in his majesty's faithful Commons the highest indignation at so daring an outrage on the rights of independent nations, and the keenest solicitude to rescue the honour of the British government from the suspicion of having concurred or acquiesced in measures so odious in their principle, and so dangerous in their example, to the peace and happiness of mankind:

"The severe calamities which, since the commencement of the present war, this nation has already experienced, the shock given to commercial credit, and the alarming consequences which the failure of the mercantile and manufacturing interests threatens to the public revenue, and the general prosperity of the country, cannot have failed to attract his majesty's attention, and to excite in his benevolent mind a sincere desire to relieve his subjects from distresses, a termination of which they cannot hope for but in the speedy re-establishment of peace:

" His majesty's faithful Commons make it, therefore, their most earnest and solemn request that his majesty, taking into his consideration all the above circumstances, will not fail to employ the earliest measures for procuring peace on such terms as are consistent with the professed objects of the war, and with that good faith, strict justice and liberal and enlightened policy which have hitherto so peculiarly distinguished the British nation."

The motion was supported by Mr. Hussey, Mr. Jekyll, Mr. William Smith and others; and opposed at considerable length by Mr. Windham, Mr. Burke and Mr. Pitt. After which,

Mr. Fox again rose. He confessed himself unable to resist the opportunity of troubling the House for a short time, even at that hour of the night, for the purpose of replying to some of the principal arguments that had been urged against his motion. If any argument against attempting to make peace was to be drawn from a supposed kind of tacit engagement of gratitude to the emperor for his assistance in saving Holland, there could be no end of the war. He should state to the people of England, and especially that part who could not judge for themselves, and were consequently most liable to be deceived, the truth on that subject. Was it meant, in plain words, that we were not to make peace till all the objects which the emperor might propose should be fulfilled? If that was the fact, he wished in God's name to know if we could be informed what those objects were. Were they just? Were they honourable? Were they to the advantage of this country? No! they were secret; and we were to spend our treasure and our blood to support that prince, to rob the Elector of Bavaria of his territories. The emperor had made no renunciation of all his objects; and since this court was to be drawn in to co-operate with whatever might be his views against France, it was a mockery in the king's ministers to disclaim intentions which they meant to carry into effect indirectly and circuitously, if not openly, in favour of the emperor. With regard to the manufacturers of this country, he did not deny that they might be incompetent judges on the present question; but though they were not competent judges as to the propriety of continuing the war, they must absolutely pay for its continuance. Then let us give them reasons for the measure; let us not delude them. But could that be done? No! for so far from being able to tell them what these objects were, the House had not inquired into them themselves. A right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke) had declared that the language which he had used that day ought not to be held unless it was to be followed by the drawing of the sword. After the

language which that right honourable gentleman had himself applied to France, at a time when we were boasting of our neutrality, he confessed he did not expect such a reproach from that quarter. That right honourable gentleman had spoken of M. Brissot in a manner not very creditable to himself. He had judged of him from the writings of his enemies; which was as unfair a test of his character as it would be if anyone were to judge of that right honourable gentleman's character from what had been written against him by Mr. Hastings' friends.

As to the character of the persons now holding the government of France, if that were to be urged as a reason for continuing the war while they should continue in power, was this more or less than proclaiming that, so long as those men remained in power, we would continue the war to punish ourselves, and not them, for their crimes and enormities? This declaration, however, was much fairer than the argument of the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer: for he had asserted that if we could obtain reparation and security the form of government in France would be no objection to our making peace and, in his opinion, he had spoken well. But he had afterwards dwelt on the difficulty of expecting so favourable a circumstance. For his own part, he thought it much better to say, like the first honourable gentleman, that we must always wage war against such a power, than like the right honourable gentleman alluded to, who said that the existence of the power in France would be no objection to peace if peace could be properly attained, but afterwards insinuated the impossibility of its attainment. If he understood the right honourable gentleman aright, there were three species of security on which we might rely. The first was a change of power in France. Was that our object? If so, we were at war with France for the purpose of giving her a constitution. The second species of security was to arise from the persons in France still entertaining the same principles, but convinced by the chastisement they might suffer of the inefficacy of attempting to carry them into execution: but if our arms should prove victorious, as a supposition of that security implied, would a people who had thus severely suffered be thus easily convinced? The third consisted in a relinquishment of a part of their dominions; and if such were the object, had we not already obtained that species of security? If it were said that we must possess Normandy and Brittany, let ministers say so; and, extravagant as the declaration might appear, it would be intelligible. It had been asked by the right honourable gentleman, were we to stop

because they had stopped, when France, by stopping, had only ceased to do us an injury? and ought we not to chastise them for that injury? Yes. We ought to do both. We had chastised them, and therefore we ought to stop because they had stopped. We had gained that species of indemnity which the right honourable gentleman wished by the capture of some of her West-India islands. Did that right honourable gentleman desire to prosecute the war further merely that he might be the tool to serve the unjust purposes of some German prince? In the course of his whole argument he had talked as if this country was suing for peace. This was weak. Was it suing for peace, when the proposition had first come from the enemy? With our miraculous successes and armies, the right honourable gentleman considered a proposition of that kind as having the appearance of suing for peace; but, under such circumstances, would it not appear more like making an offer to grant it? It would not be mean, but manly; not base, but magnanimous.

An honourable friend (Mr. Windham) had asserted that asking for the object of a war previous to its commencement was a new principle. He begged leave to give that position (and he was sure his honourable friend understood him to be speaking logically, not personally) the flattest contradiction. Whenever war was commenced it had been usual to state some object on which that war was to depend. Was a dislike to the doctrine of the rights of men to be pushed so far that the people were to be denied the right of knowing why they were to suffer the expenses and distresses of war? One right honourable gentleman had said that to make peace with France would be to make war with our allies: but would not the example of overtures for peace from Great Britain be rather likely to produce a general peace on the continent? The right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer had said that our distresses were but temporary: he hoped so too. He believed he had likewise said that they were only imaginary: he (Mr. Fox) did not wish to give his word where it might not be taken; but if he were inclined to pledge his veracity to any fact, it would be to the direct contrary. That right honourable gentleman had called his speech at the commencement of the war a desponding one. He, however, did not think it was, under the existing circumstances. As to the principles of the French revolution, his opinion remained exactly what he had before stated, though he saw and detested their present scandalous perversion. The extreme, however, of their principles in favour of democracy was not worse than the species

of principles which he had heard urged in favour of royalty. He thought, however, that of all the arguments that had been urged against royalty, none was more erroneous than that most popular one which rested on its expense. The expense of royalty itself was paltry, and not worth the attention of a great nation; but if the public were to be involved in the expenses of a war for the purpose of establishing royalty in another nation, it was enough to render them disgusted with royalty, and would give the utmost force to the revolutionary arguments on that subject. If there were persons among us who wished for the establishment of revolutionary principles in this country, he believed their numbers to be very few; to no description of men could his proposition be so odious as to men composing a party of that kind. It was a proposition abhorrent to their principles, and would inevitably crush them. It was only by war that such people and such principles could thrive. On the question of an interference in the internal concerns of France, he should freely declare his opinion. He thought that such an interference ought not to be the object of this country; but that if it were necessary as a means of obtaining our object, it ought not to be disclaimed. As to what he had said concerning a difference in the cabinet, he had spoken from the information of the right honourable gentleman's friends, in the newspapers, on the subject; and they had adopted a new mode of serving him by circulating such false reports. On the cabinet he, for his part, could expect to have no influence; but if what he could say on the part of the public ever had any influence, he hoped it would at this moment. He had now done his duty. He had attempted to check the torrent of that calamity which the present war had too fatally produced, and should persist in, and take the sense of the House upon his motion.

The House divided:

<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS	{ Mr. Hussey } { Mr. Grey }	47.—	NOES { Mr. Windham } { Mr. Jenkinson } 187.

So it passed in the negative.

ADDRESS ON THE ~~KING'S SPEECH~~ AT THE  
OPENING OF THE SESSION

*January 21, 1794.*

THE session was this day opened by his majesty with the following speech:

“ My lords and gentlemen; the circumstances under which you are now assembled require your most serious attention.—We are engaged in a contest on the issue of which depend the maintenance of our constitution, laws and religion, and the security of ~~all~~ civil society.—You must have observed with satisfaction the advantages which have been obtained by the arms of the allied powers, and the change which has taken place in the general situation of Europe since the commencement of the war. The United Provinces have been protected from invasion; the Austrian Netherlands have been recovered and maintained; and places of considerable importance have been acquired on the frontier of France. The recapture of Mentz, and the subsequent successes of the allied armies on the Rhine, have, notwithstanding the advantages recently obtained by the enemy in that quarter, proved highly beneficial to the common cause. Powerful efforts have been made by my allies in the South of Europe; the temporary possession of the town and port of Toulon has greatly distressed the operations of my enemies; and, in the circumstances attending the evacuation of that place, an important and decisive blow has been given to their naval power by the distinguished conduct, abilities and spirit of my commanders, officers and forces, both by sea and land.—The French have been driven from their possessions and fishery at Newfoundland; and important and valuable acquisitions have been made both in the East and West Indies.—At sea our superiority has been undisputed, and our commerce so effectually protected that the losses sustained have been inconsiderable in proportion to its extent and to the captures made on the contracted trade of the enemy.—The circumstances by which the further progress of the allies has hitherto been impeded not only prove the necessity of vigour and perseverance on our part, but at the same time confirm the expectation of ultimate success.—Our enemies have derived the means of temporary exertion from a system which has enabled them to dispose arbitrarily of the lives and property of a numerous people, and which openly violates every restraint of justice, humanity and religion; but these efforts, productive as they necessarily have been of internal discontent and confusion in France, have also tended rapidly to exhaust the natural and real strength of that country.

“ Although I cannot but regret the necessary continuance of the war, I should ill consult the essential interests of my people if I were desirous of peace on any grounds but such as may provide for



their permanent safety, and for the independence and security of Europe. The attainment of these ends is still obstructed by the prevalence of a system in France equally incompatible with the happiness of that country and with the tranquillity of all other nations.—Under this impression, I thought proper to make a declaration of the views and principles by which I am guided. I have ordered a copy of this declaration to be laid before you, together with copies of several conventions and treaties with different powers, by which you will perceive how large a part of Europe is united in a cause of such general concern.—I reflect with unspeakable satisfaction on the steady loyalty and firm attachment to the established constitution and government which, notwithstanding the continued efforts employed to mislead and to seduce, have been so generally prevalent among all ranks of my people. These sentiments have been eminently manifested in the zeal and alacrity of the militia to provide for our internal defence, and in the distinguished bravery and spirit displayed on every occasion by my forces both by sea and land; they have maintained the lustre of the British name, and have shown themselves worthy of the blessings which it is the object of all our exertions to preserve.

“Gentlemen of the House of Commons; I have ordered the necessary estimates and accounts to be laid before you, and I am persuaded you will be ready to make such provision as the exigencies of the time may require. I feel too sensibly the repeated proofs which I have received of the affection of my subjects not to lament the necessity of any additional burdens. It is, however, a great consolation to me to observe the favourable state of the revenue, and the complete success of the measure which was last year adopted for removing the embarrassments affecting commercial credit.—Great as must be the extent of our exertions, I trust you will be enabled to provide for them in such a manner as to avoid any pressure which could be severely felt by my people.

“My lords and gentlemen; in all your deliberations you will undoubtedly bear in mind the true grounds and origin of the war.—An attack was made on us, and on our allies, founded on principles which tend to destroy all property, to subvert the laws and religion of every civilised nation, and to introduce universally that wild and destructive system of rapine, anarchy and impiety, the effects of which, as they have already been manifested in France, furnish a dreadful but useful lesson to the present age and to posterity.—It only remains for us to persevere in our united exertions; their discontinuance or relaxation could hardly procure even a short interval of delusive repose, and could never terminate in security or peace. Impressed with the necessity of defending all that is most dear to us, and relying, as we may, with confidence on the valour and resources of the nation, on the combined efforts of so large a part of Europe, and, above all, on the incontestable justice of our cause, let us render our conduct a contrast to that of our enemies and, by cultivating and practising the principles of humanity and the duties of religion, endeavour to merit the continuance of the Divine favour and protection which have been so eminently experienced by these kingdoms.”

## ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH 121

An address of thanks, in approbation of the speech from the throne, having been moved by Lord Clifden and seconded by Sir Peter Burrell, a debate of great length ensued. After the proposed address had been supported by Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Hawkins Browne, the Earl of Mornington, Mr. Windham and Mr. Secretary Dundas; and opposed by the Earl of Wycombe, Colonel Tarleton, Sir William Milner, Mr. Courtenay and Mr. Sheridan,

Mr. Fox rose and spoke as follows: Notwithstanding, Sir, the lateness of the hour, I feel it incumbent upon me to trespass upon the attention of the House by delivering my sentiments at some length upon a question in itself of the highest importance, and which, by the advocates for the prosecution of the war, has, in my opinion, been treated in the most confused and complicated manner. In the course of what I have to offer I shall endeavour, if possible, to dissipate the mist in which the subject has been studiously involved, and to call the attention of the House to what is the real state of the question. I shall once more endeavour to obtain an explicit declaration of the object for which we are engaged in war, that the people of this country may no longer be the dupes of artifice, and be made to believe that they are expending their money and their blood for one purpose, while in fact they are called upon to do so for another.

I hope that the noble earl (Mornington) will not deem me guilty of any incivility if I say that on this point the last few sentences of his speech, long and eloquent as it was, were much more to the purpose, and afforded more valuable information than all the rest. The noble lord has declared, in explicit terms, "That while the present, or any other Jacobin government exists in France, no propositions for peace can be made or received by us." Such are his remarkable words, from which we are now, for the first time, to learn that while the present government exists in France peace is impossible. Had these words been uttered last year, they would have rescued the nation from the degrading situation of having been drawn into the contest step by step, of having been seduced by the arts of invective and delusion, and of having placed their confidence in men who did not blush to disguise the real motives of their conduct, and to disclose only such false pretences as might tend to deceive and to mislead. We are thus at once to be betrayed and insulted, and after having been drawn into the war by artifice, to be told that we must persist in it from necessity. After having been made the dupes of false pretences, we are to be told that we are pledged to what those who have deceived us choose to lay down

as principles, that we have now gone too far to recede, and that we must continue to carry on war because it is impossible to make peace.

Such, Sir, is the situation in which we are placed. But let us look to the conduct and declarations of ministers last year. The right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer, in the course of last session, although he deprecated the continuance of a Jacobin government, nevertheless declared that he would not consider that as a bar to a negotiation, provided the objects then held out, namely, the safety of Holland and the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, could be secured. The right honourable gentleman went further, he illustrated his doctrine by his practice; for he actually opened a negotiation with persons deriving their powers from the then Jacobin government of France. What, then, became of the argument that there could be no safety for neighbouring states, no security for the observance of any treaty, while such government was permitted to exist? Ministers had treated both with General Dumourier and with M. Chauvelin, and if, in consequence of such negotiations, peace had then been preserved, what must now have become of that reasoning which is so studiously brought forward to show that peace is impossible, and which must have applied with equal force at that time as at the present moment? But I shall, perhaps, be told that the appearance of negotiation was merely fallacious, that its object was not to preserve peace, but the more easily to delude the people of England into a war. I shall, perhaps, be told that the preservation of peace was neither expected nor intended by ministers as the result of their negotiations; and indeed in order to be convinced of this it is only necessary to look to the manner in which these negotiations were conducted. The means which they employed will best prove how far they were sincere with respect to the end which they professed to have in view. Did not the insulting and haughty correspondence of Lord Grenville with M. Chauvelin prove to the world that the British government had no wish to preserve peace? Did it not prove that they had begun a negotiation which they had no intention to complete, that they were only seeking for pretences to reconcile the minds of the people to a war in which they had previously determined to embark? It now appears that while they were so anxious to put the war upon the footing of protecting an ally, their object in reality was the subversion of the ruling power in France. Such were the arts by which they deluded this country into a ruinous war; such the false pretences

which they set up in order to draw money from the pockets of the people for purposes in which they might otherwise not have been disposed to concur; and such the means which they employed to bring about a war which they affirmed to be strictly defensive in its object!

Again, Sir, I will ask the question, though I own I shudder to hear the melancholy information; but if it be so, if the fatal die be cast, let not the country be left ignorant of its real situation; let it be unequivocally told that we are engaged in a war which can have no termination till we have exterminated French Jacobinism or, in other words, till we have conquered France. Is it at last decided that we are to stake the wealth, the commerce and the constitution of Great Britain on the probability of compelling the French to renounce certain opinions, for which we have already seen that they are resolved to contend to the last extremity? If such is the case, dreadful is our situation; but let us at least be apprised of our danger. And such, indeed, must be the case, if the majority of this House have come over to that system of extermination which last year was supported only by a few individuals, actuated by that sanguinary spirit which is the consequence of excessive alarm, and which at that time ministers, from motives of policy, thought proper solemnly to disavow.

I admire, Sir, the eloquence of the noble lord's peroration, but I must own that I heard it with much less satisfaction, as I could perceive it not to be altogether new, and that the manner of it had been exactly borrowed from certain speeches and reports that have been made in the French convention. And I cannot help remarking that, from a sort of fatality, those who profess the most violent detestation for the principles and modes of expression adopted by the French are continually copying them in their sentiments and language. The noble lord asked what dependence could be had upon the religion of a Robespierre, the justice of a Cambon, or the moderation of a Danton? The answer of the French convention to his majesty's declaration appealed in terms not decent to be mentioned in that House, to the wisdom of one monarch, the good faith of another, and the chastity of a third. My honourable friend (Mr. Windham), in attempting to prove that the origin of the war was not imputable to this country, treated the established principles of the law of nations with as little respect as M. Genet, the French minister to the United States of America. My honourable friend said that no dependence could be placed upon the authority of Vattel

with respect to the question of an interference in the internal affairs of other nations, and that arguments might be drawn from his work favourable to either side. He contended that there might exist circumstances of such a peculiar nature as to supersede authority and preclude the application of established principles. Exactly in the same manner reasoned M. Genet; "I would throw Vattel and Grotius into the sea," said that minister, "whenever their principles interfere with my notions of the rights of nations." Just so my honourable friend seems disposed to treat them whenever they controvert his ideas of those principles which ought to regulate our conduct in the present moment. Thus both, in order to suit their own convenience in departing from the established standard, give their sanction to a new code. I, however, more inclined as I am to adhere to the ancient standard, and to follow established rules of judging, hold the opinions of eminent men, dispassionately given on subjects which they have accurately studied, to be of considerable importance. I consider those opinions, formed under circumstances the most favourable to the discovery of truth, to be the result of unbiassed inquiry and minute investigation, and therefore entitled to great weight in regulating the conduct of nations. Those writers, in laying down their maxims, were not distracted by local prejudices or by partial interests; they reasoned upon great principles and from a wide survey of the state of nations, and comparing the result of their own reflections with the lessons taught them by the experience of former ages, constructed that system which they conceived to be of most extensive utility and universal application. From the system of such men I should be cautious to deviate. Vattel, than whom I know of no man more eminent in the science of which he has written, has laid it down as a principle that every independent nation has an undoubted right to regulate its form of government. Upon this authority I last session reprobated the conduct of Austria and Prussia in attacking the French for no reason but because they were attempting to regulate their internal government—a conduct which has, I fear, been more fatal to the political morality of Europe than anything the French have yet done. It is true, as my honourable friend (Mr. Sheridan) has stated, that the French are not alone chargeable with those crimes and calamities which we have beheld follow one another in such rapid succession. To them alone is not to be imputed that scene of carnage which has desolated the nations of Europe. Those who have been most forward to bring against them the

charge of cruelty are themselves the accomplices of their crimes. I am not apt to think that war in general has a tendency to make men more savage than they were before; yet I must confess that I regarded the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, upon its first appearance, as the signal for carnage and general war. I am no advocate for French cruelties; but to the spirit breathed and the declarations contained in that manifesto I can trace much of that scene of horror and bloodshed which has followed. For carnage, by whomsoever committed, I never can be the apologist; such a task is equally repugnant to my judgment and feelings, and therefore have I been anxious to keep myself clear of all concern in measures which have tended to lead to it, and to enter my solemn protest against those steps which I saw likely still further to increase the effusion of human blood. It is some satisfaction to me to reflect that I had no share in that system of policy which, in whatever motives it might originate, has in its consequences been productive of so many atrocities. Posterity, feeling a just abhorrence for those cruelties which have disgraced the present age, will be better able to investigate their causes and to discriminate their authors. They will look further, perhaps, than to the sanguinary temper of a people who were seeking to establish their freedom; for the love of liberty is not necessarily connected with a thirst for blood. They will endeavour to discover by what means that sanguinary temper was produced: they will inquire if there was no system of proscription established against that people; if there was no combination formed, in order to deprive them of their freedom. Those who were concerned in framing the infamous manifestoes of the Duke of Brunswick, those who negotiated the treaty of Pilnitz, the impartial voice of posterity will pronounce to have been the principal authors of all those enormities which have afflicted humanity and desolated Europe. If this country has had any share in the detestable treaty of Pilnitz, she will not be acquitted of her share of the guilt. To that treaty I ascribe the origin of the war and all its subsequent calamities. Can it be pretended, as has been asserted, that France has been in all cases the aggressor? Was she so with respect to Prussia? The proof to the contrary is obvious. We had a treaty of alliance with Prussia, by which we were bound to furnish certain succours if Prussia should be attacked. Were we called upon for those succours? No such thing. Sufficient evidence this that Prussia did not consider the war with France as a war of defence, but a war of aggression voluntarily undertaken.

But whether we or the French were originally the aggressors makes no great difference now. This much we know, that they offered to negotiate, and that all their proposals were treated with a disdain which could not fail to render peace impossible. Robespierre, that great authority, whom the advocates for the war never fail to quote when they find him on their side, accuses Brissot of having involved France in the war with this country. On the strength of Robespierre's impartial judgment in the case are ministers exculpated from the charge of having caused the war! Such are the authorities which their friends bring forward in their vindication, and such the arguments by which they attempt to defend their conduct! Upon the subject of acts of aggression previous to the war there subsists this difference between France and Great Britain: France was always ready to negotiate; the British government invariably refused. France expressed the strongest dislike to war, and seemed anxious to take every step to avoid it; the British government showed not only an inclination for war, but employed every measure that could tend to provoke hostilities. From the very circumstance that Robespierre attached it as a crime to Brissot that he was the author of the war I draw a very different conclusion from that which has been attempted to be impressed upon this House. It shows that even the most violent party in France were adverse to a war with this country. And in the charge brought against Brissot, I certainly coincide with Robespierre. Whatever might have been the views or the conduct of the British minister, he, as a wise statesman, ought certainly not to have induced France to declare against this country till the last moment. I clearly think that war might have been avoided. Such was the opinion which I expressed last year, contrary to the sense of the majority of this House, contrary to the voice of the nation at large, and contrary to the sentiments of some of those friends whom I most highly valued. Such was the opinion which I supported, at the price of any political weight I might possess in this House; at the price of any little popularity which I might enjoy abroad; and of what was still more dear to me, the friendship of those with whom I was most closely connected. However painful the sacrifices which I was then obliged to make, I repent not of what I then did; on mature reflection I find as much solid satisfaction from the advice I then gave, and from the conduct I then pursued, as it is possible to derive from the consciousness that they were precisely such as they ought to have been.

But, Sir, the origin of the war is now a matter of secondary

consideration. The first question is, how can it be concluded? My opinion still is that we ought to treat with the present or with any other government to which the present may give place in France; while others contend, and an awful consideration it is, that no treaty with any modification of Jacobin government can be secure. In discussing this question, it is my wish, if possible, to reconcile both sides of the House. A desire has been universally expressed that an honourable and secure peace should be established; such also is my desire; and if peace cannot be concluded on such terms, I will then grant that the war ought to be carried on. But it remains to be proved that such a peace cannot at present be obtained. If I shall be able to show that it can, I shall then have established my principle that we ought to treat with the Jacobin government of France. The question of security I shall now examine, considering an attempt to negotiate in the only two points of view under which, as appears to me, it can possibly fall. My own opinion, or rather conjecture, is that peace may be obtained. But however well or ill founded this opinion may be, we are to consider first whether such a peace as may be supposed attainable is so desirable as to induce us to negotiate; and next, whether a failure in the negotiation will be attended with such dangerous consequences as ought to induce us not to hazard the attempt.

However, Sir, we may abhor the conduct of Frenchmen towards Frenchmen, whatever indignation we may feel against crimes at which humanity shudders, the hatred of vice is no just cause of war between nations. If it were, good God! with which of those powers with whom we are now combined against France should we be at peace? We, proud of our own freedom, have long been accustomed to treat despotic governments with contempt, and to mark the vices of despots with vigilant sensibility. Of late, however, our resentment has been most readily excited by the abuses of liberty; and our hatred of vice is very different on different sides. In France an old despotism is overturned, and an attempt made to introduce a free government in its room. In that attempt great crimes are committed, and language is ransacked, and declamation exhausted, to rouse our indignation and excite us to war against the whole people. In Poland, liberty is subverted; that fair portion of the creation seized by the relentless fangs of despotism; the wretched inhabitants reduced to the same situation with the other slaves of their new masters, and, in order to add insult to cruelty, enjoined to sing *Te Deum* for the blessings thus conferred upon



them;—and what does all this produce? Sometimes a well-turned sentence to express our sorrow or mark our disapprobation. But hatred of vice is no just cause of war, nor ever was among nations; and when I hear men declaim on the crimes of France, who know how to reason as statesmen, I cannot but suspect that they mean to deceive, and not to convince. But, it is next said, can a secure peace be made? The question is, I confess, difficult of solution. On the one hand, abstract consideration must be avoided; on the other, experience and precedent attended to as much as possible. Do I think that a peace concluded with such a government would be secure? Perhaps I do not think it would be as secure as I could wish for the permanent interest of this country; but I desire the House to recollect what has been the nature of almost every peace that has been made in Europe. From a retrospect of the circumstances under which former treaties were ratified, it will in all probability be as secure as any peace that has been made with France at any other time, and more so than any that they, who would make no peace without the restoration of the monarchy, can ever expect to make. The present rulers of France, it is said, have declared themselves our natural enemies; and have contrived schemes and sent emissaries to overturn our constitution. Was not all this constantly done by Louis XIV.? Was he not the declared enemy of our glorious Revolution? Did he not keep up a correspondence with the Jacobite party among us; and endeavour, by force and artifice, to overturn our establishment in church and state? Had our new-fangled politicians lived in those times, they would have said, before the peace of Ryswick, “What! treat with Louis XIV., who has made war upon you unjustly, who has fomented treason and rebellion, who has attempted to destroy all that you hold sacred, and instead of a limited monarchy, and the Protestant religion, to impose upon you the fetters of despotism and popery?” Such must then have been their language; but King William and his ministers would have thought those who held it fitter for Bedlam than a cabinet. But, it is said, the Jacobins have threatened to overrun Holland and extend their conquests to the Rhine. And did not Louis XIV. invade Holland? Were his projects of conquest so moderate as to be confined within the Rhine?

The whole argument then comes to this, that you must be satisfied with the best security you can get, taking care that the power with whom you make a peace shall have no temptation to break it, either from your misconduct or want of vigilance.

The best security for Holland is the emperor's possession of the Netherlands and repairing the fortifications of the barrier towns, which he is bound by treaty to maintain. Whether the emperor shall be obliged to do this at his own expense or whether Holland and Great Britain shall assist him is matter of future discussion; certain it is, however, that it will cost us much less than another campaign. If we look at the declaration of the people of France, the first idea presented by it, although afterwards somewhat modified, but again confirmed by the declaration at Toulon, is that the restoration of monarchy must be the preliminary to peace. Now suppose that instead of the Jacobin republic some stable form of government, but not a monarchy, should be established with which we might think it safe or necessary to treat, what would become of our promises to Louis XVII. and the people of Toulon? Then, as to our security, according to the declaration, as soon as the French have a king we will cease to make war upon them, and then they set about modifications of their monarchy. But how are these to be made? Not, certainly, with a guard of German troops surrounding the hall where those who are to make them are assembled. France will then be left in precisely the same situation as she was in 1789, from which flowed all the mischiefs that are now said to render it impossible for us to treat with them. Such is the notable security which the minister proposes to obtain!

The minister also promised at Toulon, or those whom he employed promised for him, to restore the constitution of 1789, and it was, in fact, restored there. Louis XVII. was not styled King of France and Navarre, etc., but King of the French, and all the authorities appointed by the constitution of 1789 were re-established. How did this agree with the conduct of our allies? While we were in possession of Toulon, General Wurmser entered Alsace, where he issued a proclamation dismissing all persons appointed to offices under the constitution of 1789, and restoring, till further orders, the ancient system, which we are apt to call despotic. I will suppose a thing too absurd to be supposed but for the sake of argument, namely, that France is brought to submit to whatever we may choose to propose. Must she have a king? She consents. Must that king be Louis XVII.? She consents. What, in this case, will be our security? Do ministers mean to restore to France all they may take from her in the course of reducing her to this submission? Do they mean to restore Valenciennes, Condé, Quesnoy and St. Domingo? No: the secretary of state says not: he declares that you must have

an indemnification for the expense of your services in the war. Admitting that Louis XVII. will in that case have a proper sense of gratitude, and that gratitude in kings is stronger than in other men;—a position, however, rather doubted; for although “as rich as a king,” “as happy as a king,” and many expressions of the same sort, are common sayings, the breasts of kings have not always been considered as the depositories of gratitude. The phrase of “as grateful as a king” is not yet proverbial. Yet, supposing that Louis XVII. would be as grateful as this country could desire, as monarchs must be subject to the voice of their people what would that voice be? That France was deprived of her former possessions, that she was shorn of her ancient lustre, and that no fair occasion should be lost of regaining what had been ravished from her. And thus France would seize the first opportunity of attacking us, when we might possibly have no ally but Holland, and when Prussia or Austria might be leagued with France.

Sir, will any man say that this is not the probable course of events? Unless, indeed, it can be shown that princes are more honest and true to their engagements than other men; but from what history this observation is to be collected I am yet to learn. I know, indeed, that there are certain high stoical sentiments, such as, “We know what becomes us to do, and in that line of conduct which duty prescribes we are determined to persevere, be the consequences what they may.” On such sentiments men may act, if they please, for themselves, but this House can have no right to act so for their constituents, whose interests they are always bound in the first instance to consult. Are gentlemen ready to say that, sensible of all the calamities which must result from their adherence to their present line of conduct, they are nevertheless determined to persist, and to brave those calamities with their eyes open? There are causes, indeed, which dignify suffering; there are some occasions on which, though it is impossible to succeed, it is glorious even to fail; but shall we expose that country, with whose welfare we are entrusted, to certain calamity and repulse; and all for a ridiculous crusade against the Jacobins!

When I heard that the success of the campaign was to be made matter of boast in the king's speech, I thought it the highest pitch of effrontery to be found in the annals of any nation. Little did I imagine that his majesty would conceive it necessary to recapitulate from the throne all the successes obtained before the rising of the last session of parliament;

successes of which we had been told over and over. If, however, these successes were estimated from June, when his majesty last addressed the parliament, to what do they amount? Or if, which is, indeed, the only rational mode of forming a judgment of the future, the situation of France when first attacked by Austria and Prussia is compared with her present situation, what is the prospect of final success? Far from imagining that I should have to contend that the campaign has been neither successful nor glorious, I expected to be asked, when I came to talk of peace, "What! are you so pusillanimous as to suffer your spirits to be depressed by a few untoward events? Would you so far degrade your country as to offer terms of peace now which we disdained to offer in June, when our good fortune was at its height? When we have been repulsed at Dunkirk; when the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg has been repulsed at Maubeuge; when we have been driven from Toulon in a manner so afflicting, if not disgraceful; when General Wurmser has been routed in Alsace; the siege of Landau raised; and the Duke of Brunswick can scarcely protect the German cities on the Rhine—to offer terms of peace would be to supplicate, not to negotiate."

Such an appeal to my feelings I must have endeavoured to answer as well as I could; but from that task I am completely relieved by the boast made by ministers of their victories. If the advantages we obtained were such as they represent them to be, we can negotiate without dishonour; we can assume the dignified character of being in a condition to dictate the terms of peace, and of forbearing to insist on all that our superiority entitles us to demand. Here then is an additional reason for pursuing the course which I recommend. The right honourable secretary (Mr. Dundas) has said that our object in the West Indies was to gain some solid advantage for ourselves as an indemnification for the expenses of the war. This, however, is a perfectly distinct object from that of giving such a government to France as ministers might think it safe to treat with; and in many respects contradictory to the other. In pursuance of the object of solid advantage to ourselves, whatever islands we took for Louis XVII. we must wish to keep; and as we wished to keep the islands, must wish that Louis XVII., who would have a right to demand them of us, should not be restored; and thus our two objects would run counter to each other. The right honourable secretary has also said that if we were to make peace with France on the principle of *uti possidetis*, the campaign would be the most advantageous and the most glorious in the

records of history. Advantageous in that point of view it certainly might be; but glorious it can hardly be called when it is considered that we are leagued in with so many other powers against a single nation whose force we had formerly met, not only without allies, but with those who ought to have been our allies marshalled under the standard of our enemy.

But the real object of the war is the destruction of the Jacobin power in France. Have we succeeded in that object? Is it not clear to the apprehension of every man who possesses the smallest degree of information that we are now more distant from it than ever? The right honourable secretary has informed us that ministers have been greatly embarrassed whether they should send the forces at their disposal with Sir Charles Grey to the West Indies, or with the Earl of Moira to co-operate with the royalists in France. The answer is easy. If the war with the persons who now govern France is, as the friends of ministers state it to be, *bellum internecinum*, they ought not to have hesitated a moment. All expeditions ought to give way to that which alone could most materially promote their object; namely, the aid afforded to the royalists for the purpose of marching directly to Paris, and exterminating that party which is the object of such detestation that ministers can alone be satisfied with its utter extirpation. I hope that they have not in the present instance, as sometimes happens to men fluctuating between two purposes, so divided their attention as to have allotted for neither a sufficient force, and thus contrived to render both ineffectual.

My honourable friend (Mr. Windham) has stated that an idea was last session held out to the country that the war would be concluded in one campaign, and that this unreasonable expectation, artfully instilled into the minds of the public, is the chief if not the sole source of any disappointment which may be felt in the present moment. It is true that I, and those who then thought as I did, represented the dangers to be apprehended from the war; but I appeal to the recollection of every man who heard us, whether we ever said that the war was likely to be terminated in one campaign. On the other hand, was it not insinuated, if not expressly stated, in the speeches of those who advised going to war, that one campaign would be sufficient to bring it to a conclusion? Do not ministers know that the same idea has been circulated by every ministerial scribbler in every ministerial newspaper? And is it not notorious that this delusion has induced many persons to approve of the war who would

otherwise have opposed it? My honourable friend has ridiculed the idea of the war having united the French among themselves. He has asked whether, instead of union, there has not taken place a contest of two parties which has led to a series of murders? All this I grant to be true; we have, indeed, beheld the most sanguinary scenes in France in consequence of the contests of jarring parties; the complete triumph of the present Jacobin party has lately been sealed by the blood of their opponents. But whatever may have been the contests of parties in France, or whatever the consequences to which they have led, I affirm that the war has produced in that country not only union, but what is still worse for the allies, a degree of energy which it is impossible to withstand.

Let us look, Sir, to the real state of the case. When the session closed in June, there were parties existing in France of equal strength. The Girondists occupied Lyons, Bordeaux, and other places; the royalists possessed La Vendée; and the convention had to contend with Austria, Prussia, Russia, Great Britain, the Holy Roman Empire, Sardinia, Tuscany and Naples. (Tuscany, by the way, did not come under the British wing so willingly as the right honourable secretary asserted.) Yet, with these powers against them, the convention have not only quelled all internal insurrections, but defeated their foreign enemies. Toulon was taken by the British in consequence of certain conditions stipulated by the inhabitants. And yet even with the certainty of the guillotine before them, these inhabitants were so unwilling to assist the British, that no other than an ignominious evacuation could be effected. As far as can be collected from information, there is not now an insurrection from one end of France to the other. What, then, is the inference? That there is no probability, nor even possibility, of overturning the Jacobin government of France in another campaign, nor in another after that. The French are now inspired with such an enthusiasm for what they call liberty, that nothing but absolute conquest can induce them to listen to any plan of government proposed by a foreign power. Considering the spirit of the French in this point of view, I am not much comforted by anything that the noble lord has said of their finances. I remember to have heard much the same arguments delivered from the same side of the House during the American war. The noble lord will find, in the debates of those days, much talk of a "vagrant congress," which was nowhere to be found, of their miserable resources, and their wretched paper money at

three hundred per cent. discount, of which with the few half-pence you might happen to have in your pocket you might purchase to the amount of a hundred dollars. The Americans were represented as exercising against the royalists the most unheard-of cruelties; and then came what was now the master argument, that if such principles of resistance were suffered to exist, if the cause of the Americans was ultimately to be successful, there must be an end of all civilised government, and the monarchy of England must be trodden in the dust. At the time when such arguments were made we were in possession not only of one port like Toulon, but of almost all their principal ports. Yet I was not then deterred from recommending what I now recommend—negotiation, while negotiation is practicable. I lived to see Great Britain treat with that very congress so often vilified and abused, and the monarchy subsist in full vigour, certainly fuller than it had ever before subsisted since the Revolution. And if it were not presumptuous for a man to reckon on his own life, I might say that I expect to live to see Great Britain treat with that very Jacobin government with which you now refuse to treat; and God grant that it may not be under circumstances less favourable for making peace than the present!

Having shown that as much security might be obtained by treating now with France as in any case that comes within our experience, it remains only to prove that even if negotiation should fail we have still much to gain and nothing to lose. We shall thereby demonstrate to the world that the war, on our part, is strictly defensive; and convince the people of England that their money is expended, not to gratify the caprice of an individual, but to protect the honour and interests of the country. In France the advantage will be still greater; for there, where enthusiasm supplies the place of military discipline and military skill, where it makes the people submit to tyranny almost beyond human patience, we shall diminish that enthusiasm by showing them that they are not engaged in a war of defence but of conquest. The country will no longer be governed by declamations against the allies and exhortations to fight upon the frontiers: the refusal of the Jacobins to treat will ruin them in the opinion of the French people; and thus we shall at once secure the great ends of policy and justice. We shall show to the people of England that we do not wantonly lavish their blood and treasure; we shall reconcile them to the war, if its continuance should be found necessary; and we shall disarm the enthusiasm

of the people of France by proving to them our own moderation and our disposition to make peace upon equitable terms.

Whatever Frenchmen can do, I am told that Englishmen can do also. I have no doubt but they can; and that under the same circumstances, the efforts of the people of England would equal or exceed the efforts which are at present made by the people of France. Frenchmen, as they conceive, are contending for their independence as a nation and their liberties as individuals. Some, indeed, say that we are engaged in a similar contest, but few or none believe this to be actually the case. We make fine speeches in order to show how much we are alarmed, and to communicate the alarm to others. But what effect do they produce? They are the result of cold declamation and artificial eloquence; they are the speeches of orators, not the effusions of manly feeling; nobody is persuaded of the facts which they assert, or impressed with the sentiments which they convey. The success of this or that campaign will make little or no difference with respect to the security of our religion and liberty, so often brought into the question. The French, on the other hand, dread equally the despotism of Austria and of Prussia: I wish they may not add the despotism of Great Britain. In France they have ceased to make speeches on this subject, because every man feels it unnecessary to declaim on that which he is convinced every other man feels equally with himself.

On the conduct of the war, and the mismanagement of the force with the direction of which ministers were entrusted, the lateness of the hour would induce me to postpone any remark, did not the boastful manner in which they have talked of their own exertions render it impossible for me to be silent. The right honourable secretary has expatiated on the protection afforded to commerce. Has he forgot the situation in which commerce was left in the West Indies? Has he forgot how long the whole Jamaica fleet waited for convoy, and under what convoy it was at last obliged to sail? Does he not know that at the very moment he was speaking the French had blocked up the harbour of Cork, and with a few frigates parading the British Channel are making prizes of our merchantmen, and chasing our cruisers into our own ports? Sure I am that if such unexampled protection has been afforded to our commerce as the right honourable gentleman boasts of, our merchants are the most unreasonable and ungrateful people in the world. On this subject they hold a language very different; their complaints of want of protection are loud and general. When the right honourable



gentleman was taking a review of the campaign, and representing it as so highly creditable and satisfactory to himself and his colleagues, I am surprised he forgot to mention Dunkirk. Of the expedition against Dunkirk, by what strange omission I know not, the right honourable gentleman did not say a single word. I should be glad to know, Sir, the wise man who planned that expedition, and advised the division of the combined forces in Flanders. If I may trust to information, which I see no reason to doubt, such advice was never given by the Duke of York, and was directly contrary to the sentiments of that experienced general the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg. If the plan was reprehensible, let us look to the manner in which it was carried into execution. What exertions were made by ministers after the siege was undertaken to ensure success? What must have been the feelings of a gallant British prince, who, through dangers and difficulties, had approached the sea, the natural dominion of his country, and expected to find the whole coast a fortress for him, at beholding his troops destroyed by the gunboats of the enemy commanding the shore, and impeding all his operations! Of that expedition, so full of imbecility and blunders on the part of those who directed, and who were bound to co-operate in the undertaking, not of those to whom was left the task of execution without being furnished with the necessary means, some account must be given. This failure ministers are bound to explain. To the conduct and skill of the Duke of York I have every reason to believe that the subsequent preservation of West Flanders was owing. The wise precautions taken by him upon that occasion saved that country from the fate to which it was exposed by the rashness and imprudence of ministers.

With respect to Toulon, I have always understood that we obtained possession of it by negotiation, and that it was delivered up to us on conditions agreed upon with the inhabitants. If it was right so to take it, it became a matter of indispensable duty to defend it. But what was done on the part of ministers to fulfil this important part of the agreement? Might they not have sent such a force of British or Austrian troops to occupy the heights that surround Toulon as would have foiled all the attempts of the enemy? Instead of this, they sent a miserable crew of Neapolitan and Spanish troops, without discipline, experience or courage, neither skilled in the arts of defence, nor capable to resist the ardour of an impetuous enemy. Such were the men whom they opposed to a French army whose courage was exalted to the highest pitch by a sense of national honour

and their enthusiasm in the cause of freedom. When they understood, however, that the place was to be attacked, they considered some additional assistance as necessary, and in order to make a suitable provision against the danger, they borrowed an idea from the enemy, and threw in, as a reinforcement, the abilities of a civil commissioner, Sir Gilbert Elliot. Of the circumstances under which Toulon was evacuated we are not sufficiently informed to speak with confidence. But from all that ministers have thought proper to publish, and all that we have heard from other quarters, I fear it was an event as disgraceful to the British arms as afflicting to humanity. I shall be told that it is not fit to blame officers in their absence, and therefore that the conduct of Lord Hood is not now to be discussed: but, Sir, by the address I am called upon to praise Lord Hood; and surely, before I give my assent to such an address, I have a right to inquire into the grounds of approbation. The conduct of Lord Hood, I am told, ought not to be censured; it has not yet been an object of examination and discussion; and if on this ground it be proper to deprecate censure, it is surely equally proper to withhold praise. At present I can only judge from what appears on the face of the transaction, aided by those imperfect accounts which ministers have thought proper to communicate to the public. The evacuation seems to have taken place under circumstances against which policy ought to have provided; and I fear the result was such as British humanity will contemplate with but little satisfaction. I am told, indeed, by the right honourable secretary that no man was left behind who was disposed to quit the place; and I am bound to give credit to his assertion. But when I read in the accounts given to the French convention of two hundred in one day and four hundred in another (and accounts of this sort have, unfortunately, in general proved but too true) who, for the assistance which they afforded the English, were conducted to the guillotine, what am I to infer? Am I to infer that from the experience of the conduct of the English, such was their detestation of their character that they chose rather to wait for death from the vengeance of their countrymen than to seek for safety from British protection? If such is the inference, in what a point of view does it place the honour of the British nation and the boasted generosity of their character! But if the fact be otherwise, if after having betrayed these men to assist in your views you abandoned them to that ruin which was the consequence, their blood is on your heads, and at your hands will it

be required. What people henceforth will be desirous of the friendship of Britain, or able to repose themselves with confidence in your fidelity? What dependence can they have upon the efficacy of your assistance, or what security even against your desertion? Toulon, purchased by compromise, you have lost with disgrace; you have placed yourselves in a point of view entirely new to British character; you have proved yourselves neither useful as friends nor respectable as enemies. You have now to contemplate loss and repulse as the result of a transaction equally degrading to your resources and your principles, every part of which stamps your efforts with feebleness, and brands your character with dishonour.

Nevertheless a noble lord (Mulgrave) whom I do not see in his place, and who arrived in this country a short time before the evacuation, affirmed in his despatches that Toulon was in a state of comfortable security. What idea, Sir, must we have of what constitutes a state of comfortable security when such proves to have been the event! When ministers had failed at Dunkirk and, perhaps, notwithstanding this assertion of comfortable security, foresaw that they should fail at Toulon, they projected, or rather talked of, a descent on the coast of France, under the command of the Earl of Moira; when we ask why that expedition was so long talked of and never undertaken, the right honourable secretary tells us that it was delayed for want of troops. What! when we had at last hit upon a plan which was to conduct us to the gates of Paris, were we obliged to abandon it for want of men? Were no Hanoverians, Hessians or even Austrians to be found? Miserable, indeed, must be the alliances entered into by the minister if neither those whose cause he had undertaken to support nor those whom he had taken into his pay would furnish him with men sufficient for an expedition, the success of which might have redeemed so many miscarriages! Did he defer that expedition till winter because the difficult navigation of the coast of Normandy was peculiarly safe at that season? Or did he choose to delay it because the Prince of Cobourg would be unable to act and, of consequence, the French troops in that quarter would be disengaged?

With the knowledge of these events, if we retain the least spark of that independence which was once the characteristic of a British House of Commons, we cannot concur in an address which tells his majesty that we think the campaign has been successful. If there is a man among us who is not the sycophant of ministers, he cannot say that the conduct of it has displayed

anything on their part but imbecility and want of resource. The right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer possesses great talents and great eloquence; and the long period during which he has had the opportunity of displaying those talents in office has, no doubt, added to the number of his admirers; but he must now pick from the very lowest class of his flatterers before he can collect thirty men around his own table who will tell him that he is a great war minister. His friends, perhaps, will tell us that he may do better another time, and therefore they will continue to support him; but at what expense is the experiment to be made, and how much British blood and British treasure must be lavished while he is learning how to conduct a war! The right honourable secretary has said that when Lord Hood had taken possession of Toulon all the states of Italy hastened to put themselves under the protection of the British fleet. What haste the Duke of Tuscany made to seek that protection, and with what reluctance he was compelled to accept of it, the memorials, or rather menaces, delivered by Lord Harvey, who, I believe, acted in perfect conformity to his instructions, will sufficiently evince. While we were declaiming against the insults of the French to neutral states, we took upon us to dictate to the Duke of Tuscany, not only with respect to his public conduct, but his private feelings. Lord Harvey was instructed to tell him that he misunderstood the interests and disregarded the wishes of his people; that the minister in whom he confided was a person unworthy of trust; and that he himself had no proper sense of the duty he owed to his uncle and his aunt, and all his relations of the house of Austria. Our conduct to the Genoese was modelled upon the same principles; and we only had not the guilt of bombarding Genoa because that republic refused to depart from its neutrality.

What, too, was the conduct which was observed towards the Swiss cantons? On that subject I am particularly informed, in consequence of a letter which I received from a noble relation of mine (Lord Robert Fitzgerald), employed by ministers in that quarter. In this letter he states that he was instructed, on the part of the British court, to intimate to the cantons that they might, indeed, preserve their neutrality, but that they should hold no commerce with France. What sort of neutrality was that, Sir, which excluded all commerce, which deprived them of every advantage which such a situation entitled them to expect? And what sort of respect did ministers show for the rights of independent states by thus presuming to dictate to them the

terms upon which they should regulate their conduct with regard to other nations? Of the same nature was the interference attempted in the instance of Denmark and Sweden; and if these courts had not had the wisdom and the firmness to resist all the arts and menaces employed to draw them from their system of neutrality, and engage them in the combination against France, they might at this moment have been sharing, in common with the other powers of Europe, all the hardships and miseries of war. Such has been the scandalous conduct of ministers towards neutral states! But did these very ministers forget that they had themselves all along boasted of their neutrality; that they had on every occasion held forth as their justification that if France had not declared war this country would still have remained neutral? Such was the credit due to their assertions, and such the coincidence between their professions and their conduct! At the very moment they were inveighing against the French as invaders of the rights of nations, and boasting of their own strict observance of neutrality, they were committing the most daring infringements on the rights of independent states, and attempting, by the most unwarrantable means, to engage them to take part in hostilities against France. The injustice of such a conduct could only be aggravated by its meanness. The nations with respect to whom this interference was exercised were such only as ministers might hope to frighten by their menaces, and awe to compliance by the terror of superior force. We condescended not only to lay aside all respect for justice, but all dignity of character, and to become the bullies of those states whom we deemed incapable of resisting our imperious demands. Oh, shame to our policy! Oh spot indelible to the British name! When, indeed, I consider the present system adopted in the courts of Europe, when I look at the infamous conduct of Russia and Prussia towards Poland, I own that I tremble for the fate of Europe. Convinced I am that no power which is not founded in justice can either be sound or permanent. If, indeed, the courts of Europe are menaced with imminent danger, they have chiefly to apprehend the consequences of their own recent proceedings. If in no cabinet there is to be found any remnant of decency, any sense of honour, such a state of things must tend more to the dissolution of established systems than all that can be effected by Jacobin principles or Jacobin force. The rage of the Jacobins may, indeed, be directed against the outworks of their power; but they are themselves undermining the foundation.

I next come to the conduct of ministers with respect to America. In this instance they seem likewise to have adopted the maxim of M. Genet in setting aside the authority of Vattel, and testifying the most perfect contempt for the principles laid down by established writers on the law of nations where they happen to differ from their own notions of political convenience. Their system of aggression on the rights of independent states they followed up with respect to America by issuing an order to seize on American vessels bound to the French West India islands. This order, however, they were afterwards prevailed upon to withdraw, in consequence of being informed by the merchants that congress could never brook so wanton an aggression, so unprovoked an insult; and that the measure, if persisted in, must infallibly produce a rupture between America and this country. I trust the retraction has come in time to prevent the consequences of the error, but it can reflect but little honour on the ministers of this country that they have been compelled to respect the rights of an independent state only from a dread of its power, and that they have shown themselves to be more influenced by a sense of fear than by a principle of justice.

And here, Sir, I cannot help alluding to the president of the United States, General Washington, a character whose conduct has been so different from that which has been pursued by the ministers of this country. How infinitely wiser must appear the spirit and principles manifested in his late address to congress than the policy of modern European courts! Illustrious man, deriving honour less from the splendour of his situation than from the dignity of his mind, before whom all borrowed greatness sinks into insignificance, and all the potentates of Europe (excepting the members of our own royal family) become little and contemptible! He has had no occasion to have recourse to any tricks of policy or arts of alarm; his authority has been sufficiently supported by the same means by which it was acquired, and his conduct has uniformly been characterised by wisdom, moderation and firmness. Feeling gratitude to France for the assistance received from her in that great contest which secured the independence of America, he did not choose to give up the system of neutrality. Having once laid down that line of conduct, which both gratitude and policy pointed out as most proper to be pursued, not all the insults or provocation of the French minister, Genet, could turn him from his purpose. Entrusted with the welfare of a great people, he did not allow the

misconduct of another, with respect to himself, for one moment to withdraw his attention from their interests. He had no fear of the Jacobins; he felt no alarm from their principles, and considered no precaution as necessary in order to stop their progress. The people over whom he presided he knew to be acquainted with their rights and their duties. He trusted to their own good sense to defeat the effect of those arts which might be employed to inflame or mislead their minds; and was sensible that a government could be in no danger while it retained the attachment and confidence of its subjects—attachment, in this instance, not blindly adopted, confidence not implicitly given, but arising from the conviction of its excellence, and the experience of its blessings. 'I cannot, indeed, help admiring the wisdom and the fortune of this great man; by the phrase "fortune" I mean not in the smallest degree to derogate from his merit. But, notwithstanding his extraordinary talents and exalted integrity, it must be considered as singularly fortunate that he should have experienced a lot which so seldom falls to the portion of humanity, and have passed through such a variety of scenes without stain and without reproach. It must, indeed, create astonishment that, placed in circumstances so critical, and filling for a series of years a station so conspicuous, his character should never once have been called in question; that he should in no one instance have been accused either of improper insolence, or of mean submission in his transactions with foreign nations. For him it has been reserved to run the race of glory without experiencing the smallest interruption to the brilliancy of his career. But, Sir, if the maxims now held out were adopted, the man who now ranks as the assertor of his country's freedom, and the guardian of its interests and its honour, would be deemed to have betrayed that country, and entailed upon himself indelible reproach. How, Sir, did he act when insulted by Genet? Did he consider it as necessary to avenge himself for the misconduct or madness of an individual by involving a whole continent in the horrors of war? No; he contented himself with procuring satisfaction for the insult by causing Genet to be recalled; and thus at once consulted his own dignity and the interests of his country. Happy Americans! while the whirlwind spreads desolation over one quarter of the globe, you remain protected from its baneful effects by your own virtues and the wisdom of your government! Separated from Europe by an immense ocean, you feel not the effects of those prejudices and passions which convert the boasted seats of civilisation into scenes of

horror and bloodshed! You profit by the folly and madness of contending nations, and afford in your more congenial clime an asylum to those blessings and virtues which they wantonly contemn, or wickedly exclude from their bosom! Cultivating the arts of peace under the influence of freedom, you advance by rapid strides to opulence and distinction; and if by any accident you should be compelled to take part in the present unhappy contest; if you should find it necessary to avenge insult or repel injury, the world will bear witness to the equity of your sentiments and the moderation of your views, and the success of your arms will, no doubt, be proportioned to the justice of your cause!

Sir, I have now nothing more with which to trouble the House; I am sensible, indeed, that at this advanced hour I have already detained them too long. But I was anxious to put the question upon its true footing, and to free it from that misrepresentation in which it has been so studiously involved. We have of late been too much accustomed to invective and declamation; addresses to our prejudices and passions have been substituted instead of appeals to our reason. But we are met here not to declaim against the crimes of other states, but to consult what are the true interests of this country. The question is not what degree of abhorrence we ought to feel of French cruelty, but what line of conduct we ought to pursue consistently with British policy. Whatever our detestation of the guilt of foreign nations may be, we are not called to take upon ourselves the task of avengers; we are bound only to act as guardians of the welfare of those with whose concerns we are immediately entrusted. It is upon this footing I have argued the question, and if I have succeeded, I trust the House will be disposed to support me in the amendment with which I shall now conclude; entreating his majesty to make peace whenever it can be done upon safe and honourable terms without any regard to the form and nature of the government existing in France. But if gentlemen will carry on the war until the Jacobin government of France be exterminated, they must be prepared to carry on the war to all eternity. Mr. Fox then moved the following amendment to the address proposed: "To state the determination of this House to support his majesty in the measures necessary to maintain the honour and independence of the crown, and to provide for the defence and safety of the nation; but at the same time to advise his majesty to take the earliest means of concluding a peace with the French nation on such terms as it may be reasonable and prudent for us to insist on: That whenever



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such terms can be obtained we trust that no obstacle to the acceptance of them will arise from any considerations respecting the form or nature of the government which may prevail in France."

After Mr. Pitt had spoken, the House divided on Mr. Fox's amendment:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS	{ Mr. Grey } { Mr. Adam }	59.—NOES	{ Sir Peter Burrell } { Mr. John Smyth }
			277.

So it passed in the negative.

## MR. WHITBREAD'S MOTION FOR A SEPARATE PEACE WITH FRANCE

*March 6, 1794.*

DIVERS treaties which his majesty's ministers had concluded with the several powers forming the coalition against France having, by the enormous expense they created, and the nature of the obligations therein contracted, become objects of such magnitude as to excite great alarm throughout the country, Mr. Whitbread this day moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to represent to his majesty that his faithful Commons having taken into their serious consideration the various treaties which have, by his majesty's command, been laid before this House, cannot forbear to express their deep concern that his majesty should have been advised to enter into engagements, the terms of which appear to this House to be wholly incompatible with the declarations repeatedly made to this House from the throne relative to the professed objects of the present unfortunate war: To represent to his majesty the affliction and alarm of his faithful Commons that his majesty should have been advised to make a 'common cause' with powers whose objects are unavowed and undefined, but from whose conduct his faithful Commons have too much ground to dread that they carry on war for the purpose of dictating in the internal affairs of other countries; views which have been repeatedly and solemnly disavowed by his majesty and his ministers, and which are utterly abhorrent from those principles upon which alone a free people can, with honour, engage in war: To represent to his majesty that if the present war had been what his majesty's message in the last session of parliament stated it to be, a war of aggression on the part of France and of defence on the part of Great Britain, that by a treaty previously in existence between his majesty and the King of Prussia the co-operation and assistance of that power were insured to this country: That it does not appear to this House that the succours stipulated by the defensive treaty of 1788 have been required by his majesty, but that a new convention has been entered into, the stipulations of which have no other tendency than the involving us in schemes as foreign to the true interest as they are repugnant to the natural feelings of Englishmen, and of imposing a restraint upon his majesty's known disposition to avail himself of any circumstances which might otherwise enable him, consistently with the honour of his crown and the welfare and security of the country, to relieve his people from the present burdensome and calamitous war: To represent to his majesty that the irruption of the French into Savoy, and their possession of that part of the dominions of the King of Sardinia, did not appear to his majesty so far to endanger the balance of power in Europe as to induce his majesty on that account to commence

hostilities against France. That his faithful Commons do therefore express their disapprobation of that part of the treaty recently concluded between his majesty and the King of Sardinia, by which his majesty is bound not to lay down his arms until the restitution of Savoy shall have been accomplished; a species of engagement which it can at no time (excepting in cases of the greatest emergency) be either prudent or proper to make, and much less for an object which was not deemed, in his majesty's wisdom, to be so connected with the interest of this country as to occasion a declaration of war: To represent to his majesty that it appears to his faithful Commons to be the general tendency of these engagements to involve us in connections of undefined extent, for objects which we disapprove, and have disavowed: and this with powers on whose principles of equity and moderation we are instructed by experience to have no reliance, and whose complete success may, in our opinion, prove fatal to the liberties of Europe: To represent to his majesty that having thus expressed our sentiments upon the engagements which his majesty has been advised to contract, we feel it our bounden duty most humbly and earnestly to implore his majesty to consider of such measures as to his royal wisdom shall seem adapted (consistently with that national faith which, in common with his majesty, we desire to preserve religiously inviolate), to extricate himself from engagements which oppose such difficulties to his majesty's concluding a separate peace whenever the interests of his people may render such a measure advisable, and which certainly countenance the opinion that his majesty is acting in concert with other powers for the unjustifiable purpose of compelling the people of France to submit to a form of government not approved by that nation."

Mr. Fox said that he thought himself bound, in the first place, to return his most cordial thanks to his honourable friend for the able and eloquent manner in which he had brought forward the motion and, next, to give it every degree of support and countenance which it was in his power to bestow. An answer to a very small part of his honourable friend's speech had been attempted to be given by an honourable gentleman; but those arguments, which had been deduced from the general distress of the country at the end of what had been most falsely called the tenth year of unexampled prosperity, and the consideration of the enormous and increasing burdens under which we groaned, had been passed over in silence, and that for a reason sufficiently obvious, namely, because they were unanswerable. Independent of any remark with regard to the origin of the war, on which so much had already been said, it still remained for them to examine into the manner in which the war was conducted, and into the views of those with whom we carried it on. It was impossible, by any sophistry, to evade the conclusion that

Austria and Prussia were the fomenters of this contest, by the stipulations of the treaty of Pilnitz; a treaty which had for its object an unwarrantable and impious purpose, namely, the destruction of an independent state by lawless and insatiable ambition. When this was considered, every principle of reason and morality loudly called upon us to balance the advantages we might reap from such an alliance, with the shame and disgrace attendant upon any engagement with those with whom we had connected ourselves. It had been asked, in respect to Poland, whether or not when our neighbour's house was on fire it would be wise to run to extinguish a fire at a mile's distance? Mr. Fox begged leave to continue the allegory, and to ask whether it would be commendable in a man, when he found his neighbour's house on fire, to call in a band of plunderers and robbers to his assistance. Rather than make a common cause with them, either by pumping the engine, or even handing them a bucket, he would hazard every danger to which he might be exposed by the conflagration.

He admitted that the treaty of Pilnitz, although a notorious aggression on the part of the emperor and the King of Prussia, was an aggression for which an apology might have been made and accepted, provided all intention of following it up had been unequivocally disavowed. But was the treaty annulled? Was any apology made for it? Did not the emperor persist in avowed interference in the internal affairs of France? Did he not make constant complaints of the clubs of France, and other matters which could only concern the sovereign of the subjects of that country? With respect to the King of Prussia, he had no pretext for attacking France. He did not even pretend that he had any. He never called upon us for those succours which, had he not been the aggressor, we were bound by treaty to furnish him. Next, we were told that the conduct of those powers with whom we were confederated towards Poland was not to be considered with relation to the present war. From the same persons who held this language he had often heard on former occasions that a commercial connection with Poland might be one of the most valuable that this country could form. That system was now forgotten. Poland was no longer of importance in the scale of nations. Be it so: but were we to shut our eyes to the perfidy of those powers with whom we contracted alliances? Where was the instance in the French convention, or the Jacobin club, that could match the perfidy of the King of Prussia to Poland? He not only encouraged the Poles in modelling their constitution,

but he publicly congratulated them on having made their monarchy hereditary in the family of his relation, the Elector of Saxony; and twelve months after he had the unexampled impudence to declare that this very alteration had given just offence to the Empress of Russia, and was a sufficient cause for joining his arms to hers against Poland. Surely this was sufficient to teach us caution! When negotiation with France was the question, we were told, "Think not of France as a nation, look not to general maxims of policy, consider only the morals and characters of the men with whom you must negotiate." When the conduct of our allies was mentioned, we were told, "Think not of the cruel and perfidious dismemberment of Poland, look only to the present object, and the aid they can afford you to obtain it." Hence he conceived this was the inference, "Make peace with no man of whose good conduct and good faith you are not perfectly satisfied; but make an alliance with any man, no matter how profligate or faithless he may be."

When he spoke of kings, he desired always to be understood as speaking of courts and cabinets; for he held it to be, in general, as true in other countries as in this that for the actions of princes their ministers were responsible. Till that disgrace on civilised society, the imprisonment of the virtuous and meritorious La Fayette, was done away, no Frenchman who loved his country could repose confidence in the professions of the combined powers. It was in vain that we had virtue, humanity, religion in our mouths, while passion and malignity were rankling in our hearts and displayed in our actions. He had been informed that the King of Prussia, in answer to applications for the liberation of M. de La Fayette, had said that La Fayette was not his prisoner, that he was the prisoner of the combined powers, and could not be released but by general consent. This answer he knew had been given, with what truth ministers could best tell; but even if it was false, it was so much the more incumbent upon us to clear ourselves from the obloquy of being parties to the cruel treatment he had received. By our own declarations, although these were not all very consistent with one another, we engaged to support the constitution of which La Fayette was one of the principal authors. Under the constitution of 1789, we accepted of the surrender of Toulon in trust for Louis XVII. According to the forms of that constitution, the government of Toulon was administered while we were in possession of it. Louis XVII. was not styled King of France and Navarre, as by the old government, but King of the French,

as by the constitution of 1789. On the restoration of monarchy we offered peace to the French, and thus we explained that we would be satisfied with that sort of monarchy which La Fayette had assisted in endeavouring to establish. Where was the French constitutionalist who did not then call for La Fayette? With how much more effect might he have been sent commissioner to Toulon than Sir Gilbert Elliot? But mark the horrible contrast between our words and our actions. While we were holding this language to the people of Toulon, he who loved rational liberty, who loved his country and his king, who had sacrificed, in their defence, all that makes life desirable, was languishing in one of the most loathsome dungeons of a Prussian prison. About the same time that we were professing to support the constitution of 1789, General Wurmser had entered Alsace. What were his orders from the emperor? Did he profess to support the constitution of 1789? No: his orders were to abrogate every authority under that constitution, and restore the old form of government. This, which was matter of fact and practice, proved that the views of the emperor could not be the same with ours.

When Dumourier, the most enterprising and the most active general that had lately appeared, proposed joining the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg, he was declared a wise and virtuous citizen, resolved to give peace to his country, and to assist with his army in restoring, not the old despotic system, but the limited monarchy of 1789. Why was this proclamation issued by the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg? Because he meant to adhere to it? No such thing. As soon as Dumourier's defection was found to be not the defection of an army, but of a general and a few followers, all his wisdom and his virtue vanished with his power, and within four, or at most five, days the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg, without waiting to see what effect his proclamation would produce in France, with audacity and effrontery unparalleled in history, issued a second proclamation retracting every word of it. This he mentioned to show that there was as little sincerity in the emperor's professions as in those of the King of Prussia. The Prince of Saxe-Cobourg was not a man to issue proclamations hastily or without orders; and from the dates and other circumstances it was evident that he must have had the second proclamation by him when he issued the first. Soon after, the "wise and virtuous" Dumourier came to this country, which he was almost immediately ordered to quit; and he had since been reduced to a situation not much to be envied by a French general even before the revolutionary tribunal. What was the lesson

thus held out to Frenchmen? That it was better to run the hazard of the guillotine in France than to take the certainty of misery and contempt among the allies. Such was the capacity we had shown for overthrowing the Jacobin power in France! Had the King of Prussia, or had Russia, acceded to our views any more than the emperor? If they had, what better security for their good faith had they given us than they had given to Poland? Were they, who held themselves bound by no engagements, to make a splendid exception in our favour, and keep sacred to us promises which were given to others only to betray? We talked of indemnity for the past and security for the future as our objects in the war. Let us suppose ourselves in the situation of a well-disposed person in France, an enemy to the tyranny of the Jacobins, and see how these would operate. Security we might think reducing the exorbitant power of France, and to this the well-disposed Frenchman might assent. For indemnity we might be content with some of the West India islands; and to this also the Frenchman might agree. But then our allies would want an indemnity, and what would be enough for them? If the Frenchman looked to Poland, he would see that nothing short of the partition of France would satisfy them; and could he be expected to risk his life by rising in opposition to the convention, when the most flattering prospect was the ultimate ruin of his country? If France should be subdued (an event which he never considered as probable), the whole kingdom might not be sufficient to indemnify all the powers at war; and then we must have to fight for the division of the spoil, without even that delusive calm which had been said to be all that could now be obtained by a peace with France. It was pretty well known that some of our allies were not very cordially disposed towards one another. Where Prussian and Austrian troops were brought together they were much more inclined to fight with each other than against the common enemy, and were only restrained by the strong arm of power. Except ourselves and Holland, not a state had joined the confederacy but those under absolute monarchies. Holland, we all knew, had been drawn into the combination by influence equivalent to force, and would rejoice in an opportunity of getting out of it with safety.

But he should be told that it was easier to look back and find fault than to look forward and point out a remedy. The motion made by his honourable friend presented the means of finding that remedy. The inclination of Holland to peace could not be

doubted; Spain, if he was not much misinformed, would consent to it without any indemnity; and it was very generally reported and believed that Prussia demanded of us a subsidy of £700,000 as the condition of prosecuting the war. This, if true, was a fortunate circumstance, for it opened a door for peace with the consent of all the allies. The late campaign had been called successful beyond our hopes. The latter part of it certainly was not that which could be thought the most fortunate. Now, after being told, as the House was repeatedly told last session, that France was only capable of one desperate effort, and after seeing that effort baffled in the early part of the campaign, but the loss nearly repaired in the subsequent part of it, not by desperate efforts but by perseverance, he could not entertain very sanguine hopes of the next campaign, even if it should begin as brilliantly as the last. He was not bold enough to assure himself, or the House, that we should be able to obtain the restoration of Savoy, which we had bound ourselves by treaty to obtain; but if he were, he should still object to giving the means of making peace out of our own hands. When ministers were charged with neglecting the business of convoys, they answered that France in the first instance had reaped the fruits of her unexpected aggression; yet this unexpected aggression, as it was called, was made several months after the conquest of Savoy, after the battle of Jemappe, and the invasion of the Austrian Netherlands.

Mr. Fox said it was matter of great consolation to him that, in spite of popular clamour, he had used every endeavour to prevent the war; and, when it was unfortunately commenced, to render it as short as possible. Believing now that several of the allies were disposed to peace, he thanked his honourable friend for affording him an opportunity of repeating and recording his opinion on the subject. He would say nothing of the calamities inseparable from war, although on every question they were perfectly in order. It was idle to say that because they were general topics, and applicable to every war, they were fit matter of argument against none. The very circumstance of their generality rendered them matter of serious consideration before we entered upon any war. It was impossible to devise productive taxes that would not fall ultimately upon the lower classes; and when such additional burdens had been imposed, it was impossible to call war a state of prosperity. Every new tax fell heavier than those which went before it, because its weight was added to that of all the preceding. Thus, the



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taxes for the American war fell heavier than those for the war preceding; those for the present heavier than the taxes for the American war; and those for any future war must be heavier still.

The House divided:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS	{ Mr. Whitbread } { Mr. Sheridan }	26.—	NOES { Mr. J. Smyth } { Mr. Pole Carew } 138.

So it passed in the negative.

## BILL TO ENABLE SUBJECTS OF FRANCE TO ENLIST AS SOLDIERS

*April 17, 1794.*

IN addition to the plan of raising an internal force by voluntary subscriptions, Mr. Pitt moved on the 7th of April, "For leave to bring in a bill to enable subjects of France to enlist as soldiers in regiments to serve on the continent of Europe, and in certain other places, and to enable his majesty to grant commissions to subjects of France to serve and receive pay as officers in such regiments, or as engineers under certain restrictions." Leave was given to bring in the bill, and on the motion for its passing, upon the 17th,

Mr. Fox said he was really sorry, at that stage of the business, to trouble the House, as their minds must be to a considerable degree made up upon the subject; but he absolutely felt himself called upon to say at least a few words, because the bill appeared to him in some points of view to be of the utmost importance and, if carried into effect upon those principles upon which it had been maintained, likely to produce consequences of the most alarming tendency, and calamities the most dreadful that ever war in modern times had produced. In the earlier stages of the bill he was not very anxious to deliver his sentiments upon it, because he wished to be silent as to his objections until he had heard the reasons which should be urged in its favour; and although the House was then in the last stage of it, the same distress and difficulty remained as to the principle upon which it had been brought forward as existed at the commencement of this proceeding. It was true several objections had been made to the bill, some amendments had been proposed, with different degrees of success, and some answers had been given to the objections; but these applied chiefly to the provisions of the bill. As to the principle of the bill, very little indeed had been urged in its support, and nothing that had in the smallest degree changed the first opinion he entertained on the subject; on the contrary, many of those reasons which had been urged in favour of the bill, and which had been approved by the majority of the House, had excited in his mind very great alarm at the measure altogether. Almost all that had been said by one set of its defenders amounted to this, that those men who were to be

enlisted under it would feel that, from success, they might hope to be restored to their honours, their fortunes and their country; from defeat, they must expect to meet either poverty or death. Standing in this alternative, where success promised so much, and defeat placed before their eyes the most dreadful calamities, they must, it was supposed, engage with ardour in the cause. Another set of the defenders of the bill, and particularly one right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke), had said "that the bill was an auspicious beginning of a new system; that the honours, rights and property of the emigrants must be restored to them before our own could be said to be secure; that Great Britain, with regard to its property and its rights, should feel an identity of interests with the emigrants of France; and that, except those properties and those rights were restored to them, our own would be comparatively of little value." This, Mr. Fox said, must be admitted to be a position perfectly novel, and would, in his opinion, in its nature and tendency, be dangerous to this country and to Europe if adopted by government or sanctioned by parliament.

He wished, for a few moments, to call the attention of the House to the progress of the business. Though inimical to the war in its commencement, and wishing sincerely, as he thought it for the interest of the country, that it should be avoided if possible, yet being once entered upon, he held it right that it should be prosecuted with energy and effect. To this end he promised his support, thinking that it was to be carried on as all former wars had been carried on, by fleets, armies and money; and, in the view in which it was stated to the House at its commencement, that was the species of support that it was understood government looked for; for it was at that time distinctly stated that the object of the war was to repel a distinct aggression of France against Great Britain and her ally the United Provinces, which aggression was the insult offered to this country by certain decrees of the national convention, and by their attempt to deprive Holland of the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt. That those were good grounds of war could not be denied, unless satisfaction might have been obtained by negotiation. They were certainly proper subjects to discuss by negotiation; and it was his opinion, if those means had been tried, that the present war might have been avoided. But such was not the opinion of the executive government; it was not the opinion of the House of Commons; and we therefore had recourse to arms to procure satisfaction for the insult, security

from further aggressions, and indemnity for our losses. Mr. Fox said he sincerely lamented that such was the opinion of the executive government and of the House of Commons; because he believed it to be the cause of all the evils we had already suffered, and of the many calamities in which we and the rest of Europe were likely to be involved. He wished that we had had recourse first to negotiation; and if that had failed to procure us all we had a just right to demand, no doubt could have been entertained of the propriety of our entering into a war, and endeavouring to procure from France, by the success of our arms, that justice which she refused to the wisdom of our councils.

At the commencement of the war, the government of France made no part of the consideration of parliament as connected with the question of peace, except as to how far such a government was capable of affording security against future insult and aggression. When that security was discussed in that House, and those who were most disposed to decry everything that belonged to the government of France were driven to an explanation of what they meant and what they really intended to insist on, the opinion of the House he understood to have been this, but it was a matter of much difficulty to know precisely what kind of security could be obtained from the present government of France; but it was then admitted that to obtain some security on that point was not altogether impossible; and that if security could be had, there existed no objection to the form of government, nor should that be considered as any obstacle to concluding a peace. There was no necessity for him to argue that there existed a possibility of obtaining security from such a government, because from the statement of the condition obviously the possibility was admitted. If those gentlemen who argued this conditionally did not feel the possibility of obtaining security, they certainly dealt in a very unfair and uncandid manner with the House and with the country; for if they were of opinion that we could not obtain security from the present government, ought they not, in an open, bold and manly way, to have then declared that it would be impossible to obtain peace while that government had existence, and that to obtain so desirable an object that government must of necessity be destroyed? That, however, was not the state of the case last year; nothing of that sort had been insisted upon; no such opinion was ventured to be advanced; and he was very much inclined to believe that if the object for which we were about to engage in the war had been stated by the

executive government to have been the subversion of the government of France, that it would not, either in that House or by the people of the country, have been supported. He complained, therefore, on the part of the people of England, and on the part of the House of Commons, that we had been led into a war upon one pretence, and that the operations for carrying it on were directed to purposes and objects totally different from those held out to that House and to the country by his majesty's ministers.

He would ask if this measure was necessary for carrying on the war on the principles avowed last year, although it was not then either a fit or necessary one? It would be a trifling answer to say, "It might not have been necessary then, but we know it to be so at present, and it is never too late to mend." The manner in which they proposed it should have been fair, open and sincere; they should have told the House the truth; they should have confessed their own laches last year, and shown they were willing and desirous, by new diligence, to make the best atonement in their power to their country for their former neglect and inattention: they should have said with one voice, "We now look upon the war as such that this measure should have been adopted originally, and that it is a necessary one, though we entertained a different opinion at first." They should declare to the House what was in reality their system and their object; in what particulars it had been altered from their original plan; and then, whether such alteration was for the better or the worse, have left parliament to judge. Certainly, he thought the war on our part to be both just and necessary, provided it was impossible to obtain, in the first instance, satisfaction and security by negotiation; but he could never agree that we should continue the war for the purpose of imposing a form of government on France. He certainly thought that, even though the government of France was an unjust or wicked government, it was in direct contradiction of the first principles of an independent state, and of the sovereignty of nations, to interfere with its formation. If a people, in the formation of their government, have been ill-advised, if they have fallen into error, if they have acted iniquitously and unjustly towards each other, God was their only judge; it was not the province of other nations to chastise their folly, or punish their wickedness, by choosing who should rule over them, or in what manner and form they should be governed.

These points, continued Mr. Fox, seemed to have been

universally understood and assented to last year; they were points agreed on by all the authors he had ever had an opportunity to consult, who had treated of the law of nations or the nature of government. Now, it seemed, we had entirely changed our system, and were to employ the French emigrants in support of our new one. If the purport of this bill had been simply to enable his majesty to enlist foreigners, he should have considered it in a much more favourable light; but to his understanding and comprehension it appeared to be this: that we pledged the faith of this country to the emigrants for the full restoration of all their rights, titles, privileges and properties, which they had lost by the Revolution, and that we would overturn the present existing government of France by force of arms. With respect to those unfortunate men, the emigrants, there was no man who felt more sincerely for their situation than he did. It was true he differed in sentiments with most of them; he disapproved of their conduct in many instances; but if difference of opinion were a cause of withholding sympathy and compassion, this would indeed be a dismal world to inhabit. Difference of opinion was, in his mind, one great cause of the improvement of mankind, because it led to inquiry and discussion. It was his opinion that in all points, civil and religious, toleration of opinion was wisdom; upon that depended all the peace, he had almost said all the virtue, and consequently all the happiness of the world. This humane doctrine was the great leading feature of the mild and beneficent system of Christianity, and what had tended to render it such an inestimable blessing to mankind. He should, therefore, by no means say anything harsh of the emigrants, though differing from them in sentiments; on the contrary, it appeared from their conduct that they were sincere in their professions. But because he sympathised with and compassionated the sufferings and misfortunes of those men, it was not necessary that he should be willing to pledge the faith of the country for the restoration of all they had lost by the Revolution, and for the total subversion of the present ruling powers in France; that was a conduct which, if adopted, would, in his opinion, expose this country to great and tremendous evils.

The war in itself, considering the present condition of France, Mr. Fox considered as formidable to this country and to its constitution. Whatever might be the objects to be attained by it in the minds of other men he could not tell; two only seemed most desirable to be entertained: the first, that its duration should be as short as possible; the second, that in its prosecution it

should be as little bloody and savage as the nature of the case would admit. The present bill he principally objected to as militating against those two wishes of his heart; for it would certainly tend both to prolong the war and render it more savage, bloody, and inhuman than any war that had ever disgraced the annals of modern nations. If the object of the war, as had been originally stated, was to recover the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt for the United States, or to repeal any insult offered us by the French, or to obtain satisfaction for present and security against future aggression, he confessed that he should be sanguine in his hopes with respect to its termination. He might then think that those who considered the last as a fortunate campaign had not viewed the matter so unfairly; because, if such were the objects of the war, the consideration of the places we had taken might induce the French to think of peace. If we took Pondicherry, that might bring us a step nearer peace; because prudence might induce them to the measure, in order to save the remainder of their Indian possessions. The capture of St. Domingo, or Martinique, would be another step nearer the attainment of that desirable object; because a regard for the preservation of their other dominions in the West might incline them to conclude a peace. In that point of view it was easy to conceive how a nation of Europe might be conquered in the East or West Indies: successes of this kind, in all former wars, had been so many steps towards the conclusion of peace. Upon such grounds as these were founded the peace of Utrecht concluded by Louis XIV., the peace of Fontainebleau by Louis XV., and the peace of Paris in 1783 by Great Britain. But was that the case in the present war? No such thing; because the object of the present and former wars was essentially different. If the principle of the present bill was carried into effect, we must necessarily destroy the present existing government, or what you please to call it, of France. It would avail us nothing, if our object be the destruction of the French government, to take the whole of their East and West India dominions; it would avail us nothing that Brissot, or Danton, or Robespierre were put to death; for what would the French say? "True, we have had all these losses; but we are not fighting for dominion or territory, or for particular men; we are fighting for our existence, and for the existence of our government." Successes of this kind, therefore, had no effect whatever towards accelerating the conclusion of a peace. It was true, it might be said, that the more we took of their possessions, the

more we should reduce their strength, and therefore the more we should incline them to wish for peace. This mode of arguing was certainly right when one thing was held equivalent to another, and when the great object was the loss or gain of possession or dominion. These arguments had force or application only to a case where we chanced to be at war with a government that it was not our object to destroy, but they could have no bearing whatever on the case of a war with a government the destruction of which was made a necessary preliminary of peace. To such a government, therefore, the loss of an island, or of islands, could afford no argument for making peace, because the persons exercising the powers of government knew that our object and endeavours aimed at their entire destruction.

It might be said that by degrees we might so weaken them that they would consent to any form of government rather than continue the war; for, by diminishing their power, we should lower their pride. He would ask, was there any man in that House, or any man in the country, that had ever considered the subject, who thought that in the present situation of France such an effect could follow from such a cause? Could we conceive that those men, with such a spirit, whether from terror of their rulers, depravity of heart, enthusiasm, or from whatever cause such a spirit and disposition might have originated; could we conceive that these men would be found, in any considerable number, to change the sentiments they had almost to a man adopted, of forming a government for themselves, and tamely and submissively bear the yoke of a foreign power, and take any government that should be dictated to them; and all this because we might have proved successful in the East and West Indies? If any person could hold such an opinion, his mind must be strangely constituted indeed! It might, however, be said that our successes would tend to make the people discontented with their present rulers, and diminish their attachment to their government. Was such an effect to be expected, or at all likely to be produced? Was there a man, woman, or even a child, in France, who, having borne all that they had borne within the last five years, who having witnessed the horrors and blood with which their country has been deluged, to whom each day had been a day of life and death, yet had nevertheless adhered to their government and their rulers, would now desert them merely for the loss of an island in the East or West Indies? We all knew that when the mind was irritated and goaded, when it was busied in viewing daily objects of terror at home, it was not



likely to be much affected by remote consequences: they were either not taken into its consideration at all, or, if considered, compared with nearer evils they were looked on as nothing. If our object was, therefore, against the government, and not against the possessions of France, there was no man of sense who would not admit that those different advantages which he had enumerated had not the smallest tendency to promote or restore peace; and there could be no advantage which we could possibly gain that could contribute to this end unless we should be able to take Paris, or some other material part of France; which would be found an undertaking of infinite difficulty and dreadful danger.

It was not his intention, Mr. Fox said, to inquire into the conduct of the war. He had stated these points merely for the purpose of pointing out the difference between the two kinds of war to which he had alluded, as to the circumstances which tended to the acceleration of peace; and certainly, in that point of view, the difference was great indeed. Viewing, therefore, the present bill on such a principle, and considering it, what the common sense of mankind must admit it to be, a virtual engagement on the part of this country to restore the ancient government of France, and to replace those emigrants in the situation they formerly enjoyed, surrounded by all that pomp and dignity we heard so elegantly depicted, peace appeared to him an object infinitely distant. It was impossible to say what turn the affairs of France might take; nothing could be more improper, or even ridiculous, than any attempt to predict what might occur: but looking on the circumstances of that country as they were at present, he felt himself bound to say that the conquest of the French seemed to him a task so dangerous and difficult that he should be unwilling to advise it to be undertaken. It had been said on a former night by an honourable gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson), and it was wisely and truly said, that the best mode of conquering France was to take Paris, and that the only means by which this could be effected would be by first taking the strong towns on the northern frontier, which might serve as a protection for our troops, and enable us to march forward with security: that, Mr. Fox said, he also conceived to be wise and just reasoning, and the only way in which Paris could be taken; but the very mode proposed for attaining this object convinced him at once of the difficulty, and almost impossibility, of carrying it into effect. When we looked on the iron frontier of France, and saw what must be passed before we could have any fair

prospect of marching to Paris, we must be convinced that the task was of an Herculean kind; required an Herculean labour, length of time, and an uninterrupted series of success to accomplish; and we should also take into consideration the nature of the cause, and the temper and disposition of the people with whom we have to contend.

It had been mentioned more than once, and he presumed by way of reproach to him, that he gloried in the victory of Jemappe. He had heard it, often as it had been mentioned, without pain or emotion; for he had not said anything upon that subject which he had yet found cause to repent of; nor did he retract a single syllable of what he had ever said on that occasion. It had been asked, by way of derision, was it anything extraordinary for 60,000 men to vanquish 20,000, and wherein consisted the glory of the action? He did not mean to say that it was a thing extraordinary or surprising; but let them not therefore hold the valour or military character of the French too cheap, even in their present situation. It was not his design to detract from the valour of the Austrians or Prussians, much less did he wish to detract from the well-known bravery and military skill of his countrymen; at the same time, if it was wise and necessary to look our danger in the face, let us not think of despising our enemy: from this error many fatal consequences had often arisen. He should refer the House for the military character of the French to the manifesto of the King of Prussia: when assigning his motives for withdrawing himself from the war, he spoke of them as a people of uncommon bravery and approved tactics. This was the opinion of experience; and not merely the opinion of the king himself, but that of all his generals and officers; men, if he might use the term, the most learned in military affairs, and founded on dreadful experience of their prowess.

*Experto credite, quantus*

*In clypeum assurgat, quo turbine torqueat hastam.*

In the description which this declaration gave there was nothing upon which any reasonable hope could be founded that the French were a people easy to be conquered: to which he must add that the experience of history had taught him to expect that such a people, fighting under such circumstances, must be very formidable to the most powerful enemy that could be opposed to them; and if we were to conjecture the future from the consideration of the past, such an event as the complete conquest of the French in war could not be reasonably expected.

If, therefore, this was likely to be a pursuit so hopeless, he should wish to ask whether it were prudent, or consistent with the dignity and honour of this country (for the honour of a nation, like the honour of an individual, was the most valuable and sacred of its possessions), to employ those unfortunate people in such a visionary scheme? It was not right to pledge our honour for the performance of what all the world knew to be extremely difficult to perform, and what, perhaps, many experienced people considered as altogether impossible to effect.

Having thus endeavoured to show that the prospect of peace would by this measure be placed at an infinite distance, and that it was highly improper to pledge ourselves for the performance of what all the world must perceive to be very doubtful, if not desperate, namely, to overturn the present existing government of France, and to restore to these emigrants all the rights, honours and privileges they formerly enjoyed, he was led to consider the effect that this war, by its continuance, would have on the hearts and the general morality of the people of Europe. He did not mean to boast the possession of humanity as peculiar to himself more than to any other person; but he begged leave, at the same time, to say that he hoped he did not possess less than any other man who had not more acute feelings or a better understanding: he was, therefore, convinced there was not one man in this country, however he might differ from him in opinion as to the justice, or the origin, or the necessity of the war, who felt more real anguish for the calamitous state of Europe at this moment than he did. It had been said, and truly, that one of the many evil consequences of the war was that it tended to render the hearts of mankind callous to the feelings and sentiments of humanity. When we daily heard of the massacres of such numbers of individuals that memory could not even recollect their names; when we contemplated the slaughters at Lyons, at Marseilles, at Bordeaux, at Toulon; he much feared that the effect would be injurious to the morals of all Europe: the misfortunes experienced by multitudes of individuals at these and other places had been so great that the mind was bewildered in the magnitude and complication of the misery. He was clearly of opinion that the human mind might be made so familiar with misery and scenes of horror as at last to disregard them, or at least to view them with indifference. It was difficult to preserve always the acuteness of the feelings; and it was, in his mind, no small misfortune to live at a period when scenes of horror and blood were frequent. By the constant

repetition of such scenes our feelings were by degrees blunted, and in time became indifferent to what at first would interest them with the most amiable sympathy and distress. Humanity on this account had been, by the Stoics, deemed a weakness in our nature, and in their opinions impeded the progress of the judgment, and consequently the improvement of morals; but his sentiments so widely differed from theirs, that he thought humanity not only not a weakness, but the strongest and safest friend to virtue. No man could lament, therefore, more than he did the mischief done to mankind by making the heart too familiar with misery, and rendering it at last indifferent; because on the heart and on the feelings chiefly depended our love of virtue; and he was convinced they did more service to the cause of virtue than the wisest precepts of the wisest men. Humanity was one of the most beautiful parts of the divine system of Christianity, which taught us not only to do good to mankind, but to love each other as brethren; and this all depended on the sensibility of our hearts, the greatest blessing bestowed by Providence on man, and without which, with the most refined and polished understanding, he would be no better than a savage.

The feelings of all Europe had already suffered by the repeated horrors of France; but, with regard to their cause, the French appeared to have, in a great measure, been driven to these violent scenes of bloodshed and horror. It was with a nation as with an individual; for if an individual was placed in a situation in which he felt himself abandoned by the whole world, and found that no one was his friend, that no one interested himself in his happiness or welfare, but that all mankind, as it were by general consent, were his enemies, he must become a misanthrope and a savage, unless he possessed a mind more heroic and exalted than we had any right to expect. Such was the situation in which France had been placed; almost all Europe had united against this single people; not for the purpose of regaining any territory upon the Rhine, or restraining the strides of an ambitious monarch towards universal empire, as had been the case with the combination against Louis XIV.; not for the purpose of repelling an aggression, or to obtain reparation for an injury, or satisfaction for an insult, or indemnification for losses, and security for future peace, but for the open and avowed purpose of destroying a people, or compelling them to accept a form of government to be imposed on them by force of arms; and that, too, the form which, from every conjecture

that could possibly be made, they most detested and abhorred—their ancient monarchy. Could it be wondered at that the French, under such circumstances, were savage and ferocious? He did not say that it was the intention of the combined powers to compel them to return to their ancient form of government; it was enough that they were under the apprehension of it, and that almost the whole of Europe were leagued in arms against them; and no man could deny but, as a people, they had an equitable and moral right to resist such an attempt, and to refuse their submission to such dictation.

A right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke) had drawn a pleasing picture of the happiness of the people of France under their monarchy, and had bestowed what he considered an unmerited eulogium on that form of government, where the French peasant was described to have sat in happiness and security under his vine or his olive. He, for his part, Mr. Fox said, had certainly no pretensions to anything like profound philosophical observation on men or manners, but he had been in France, where this mild and temperate monarchy was, and had seen some of their peasants, who were so far from having anything like security for the possession of any property they might have, that it was altogether at the disposal of the higher orders; and their situation in general was, to all appearance, so replete with misery, so abject and so wretched, that they could not be objects of envy to the subjects of the most absolute despots upon earth. He knew that France had been called “a mitigated absolute monarchy”: this he would deny from experience, and contend that it was most fierce and barbarous. He did not mean to compare the situation of the people of France, under their monarchy, with the situation of the people of this country, or with the situation of the inhabitants of Holland, of the United States, or the happy Cantons of Switzerland; he would compare them with the inhabitants of Germany and Italy and the other despotic governments of Europe, and contend that their situation was by far the most distressed and wretched of any of them. Seeing this to have been their situation, and apprehending the object of the combined powers to be to replace them in that bondage, it was not surprising that they should become furious.

In a former debate on this bill he had heard it asked, Whether, if any of the emigrants employed by this country should be taken and put to death, we were to retaliate? He had heard also, in reply, a solitary but dreadful “Yes”; and surely the wit

that had been used on this reply was as ill-timed as it was inapplicable. Dreadful were the consequences that must follow the adoption of a system of retaliation; dreadful the situation in which these unhappy men would be placed, who must, if taken, be considered as rebels and put to death: as to these unfortunate men, the war would be a civil war to all intents and purposes; and every man knew that civil wars had never been distinguished by humanity. A great military authority (Lord Mulgrave) had asserted that these evils, so much apprehended, were not likely to be produced. He rejoiced at this information; but, nevertheless, he believed that those gallant men who fought under the Prince of Condé, and were unfortunately taken prisoners, had been to a man put to death. The same noble lord had asked whether we should suffer ourselves to be bullied by the French out of the means which were in our power? Certainly not; but let us be certain, in the first place, that these means rested upon fair grounds, and were such as we had a just right to use. The opinion which he was about to state was, like many other of his opinions, perhaps singular; it was this, that war ought to be carried on as mercifully as possible, without any regard to persons. He certainly could not find this opinion either in books or in the practice of Europe; and history taught all who perused it that the treatment of prisoners in civil wars was never remarkable for humanity. Let us look to our own history, and to what were called good times. We had had, during the present century, in this country two rebellions, in the years 1715 and 1745. Did we then reverence this merciful maxim? Did we consider that the treason of every man was done away by holding a commission from a foreign power when taken in the field of battle? No: Mr. Radcliffe offered this plea; but it did not avail him: he was executed.

If the French were to land in this kingdom, and there chanced to be any body of people so abandoned to all sense of duty, so lost to the love of their country, so dead to their own interest and happiness, as to join them, should we pardon any of them who should produce a commission from the convention? We should not. If, therefore, any of these emigrants were taken in the field of battle, in arms against their country, was it to be supposed that the convention would respect the commissions granted by the King of Great Britain, or that those commissions would afford them protection or secure them from punishment? In the present question, if we determined not to retaliate, in what a disgraceful and calamitous situation did we place those

whom we employed! And if we did retaliate, good God! in what horrors would Europe be involved! In whatever point of view he considered the measure, it appeared highly objectionable; it would tend, if adopted, to render the war more bloody and of longer duration.

Let us take a view (continued Mr. Fox) of ancient history, and see how wars have been conducted, and compare them with the present; we shall then see the reason why the present war is more bloody and more cruel than any of those wars recorded in modern history. In modern wars, the contest has been, generally speaking, concerning the possession of territory; at least the loss of territory, for the most part, has determined it; each acknowledging the independence of the other as a nation; and therefore the parties, like two individuals at law, did not seek to destroy each other after their difference was determined. In ancient wars, the contest was between powers seeking the destruction and extermination of each other as a nation. It is not my wish to take from the mild effects of the Christian religion, which also has tended to soften the manners of men, but the merciful manner in which modern wars have been carried on, in comparison of the ancient, has resulted chiefly from this great difference between their objects. *Delenda est Carthago*, said the Roman senate of Carthage: Athens conceived it was for her interest to destroy the government of Sparta and, *vice versa*, the Macedonians were convinced of the necessity of extirpating the Greeks. To these wars of the ancients the civil wars of modern times alone afford a parallel, because their objects are also to effect the destruction of governments; and for this reason they are less merciful and mild than wars waged between independent sovereigns. The present contest with France may be justly termed a civil war, in the force, the acrimony and savageness with which it is carried on.

The combined powers had declared that the government of France must be destroyed, and that declaration had rendered the French desperate and cruel. That was a system at which humanity shuddered; that was a system promoted by the present bill; a system openly avowed and maintained by those who supported the principles of this measure. That system had already had its effects in this country; it had rendered the people callous; some through fear, a power which deprived a man of rationality; others by indifference, which prevented a man from exerting his intellect, and benumbed his feelings. To what but this could be imputed the excessive severity of the

sentences lately passed upon Mr. Muir, Mr. Palmer and others, for having done nothing more than an honest man, acting perhaps under the influence of a misguided judgment, might conceive it to be his duty to do; for having done nothing more than pursue a little too closely the former conduct of his present prosecutor? To what but this could be imputed the general disinclination of the House, and lastly its absolute refusal, to interfere with these sentences? If any man, three years ago, had committed such an offence, and had received such a sentence, the House would have fired with indignation and interfered to prevent its execution. That punishments so enormous should be inflicted on gentlemen of a liberal education and irreproachable manners, probably possessed of good hearts, and whose only crime so nearly resembled the virtues of other men, who even arrogated to themselves some merit on that head; that such men, for a bare misdemeanour, should receive a sentence worse than death; a sentence that had the certainty of death without its immediate release from misery, a lingering, peevish infliction of a punishment which, in cruelty, exceeded immediate death; and all this for a conduct not long since deemed meritorious; this was owing to the horrid examples of France, and arose from inordinate fear and miserable apprehension. Was he not, then, entitled to say that the present war was dangerous to the constitution of this country, since it tended so directly to extinguish, in that House and in the people, the spirit which had hitherto guarded the constitution from the daily attacks of the executive power? Impressed so forcibly with these sentiments, he felt himself unable to withhold his opinion; not from any expectation of making any deep impression on the majority of that House; that, he was well convinced, would be a hopeless expectation; but because he conceived it his duty so to do, that the public might be called upon to exert their judgment.

There were two points more to be considered before he could take leave of the subject: first, the probable effect this system would have on the French character; and second, the immense expense the measure might introduce in the public expenditure of this country. With regard to the first point, it was to be observed that the French character was a marked one; and nothing was more prominent in it than an attachment to their country, which might be called patriotism, or nationality, but which consisted in the desire of having France appear magnanimous and great in the eyes of the world. Perhaps in this they had never been equalled except by the ancient Romans.



This ought to make the House cautious as to what might be the result of employing any very considerable number of these men. Let them consider, that should we even succeed in placing Louis XVII. on the throne, and a question of indemnity were to arise, perhaps these very French troops we had employed might take part against us; they might possibly have also other interests in betraying us. He did not mean to say they would do it, but at the same time it would not be altogether discreet to hold out to them too great a temptation. Suppose, however, that we should fail in our attempts, and should be forced to return to the first object of the war, what would be then the consequence? We should become the sad spectators of the ruin we had occasioned; we should hear these emigrants reproach us in this manner: "We depended on your promises, and you have deceived us; we relied on you with confidence, and you have thus prevented us from using any endeavour to reconcile ourselves to our country." We should then be forced either to cast them out to the wide world in misery and distress, or to burden the people of this country for their maintenance; a burden that would be more heavy and less just than that in consequence of the protection afforded the loyalists in the American war. With regard to the expense, it was impossible to say to what extent it might go; and as our resources, like all human things, had their limits, we could not be quite sure the people would be able to bear the burden; nor could we be sure, supposing them able, that they would be long willing to do so. When so desirable an end would be accomplished God only knew! but he contended that we should endeavour to accelerate the period of peace, and to make the war as little savage and ferocious as possible. This bill, as inimical to these two very desirable objects which were so much the wish of his heart, should have his decided negative.

The bill passed without a division.

## PRUSSIAN SUBSIDY

*April 30, 1794.*

On the 28th of April a message was delivered from the king informing the House of Commons of the treaty concluded with the King of Prussia, by which Great Britain and the States General had jointly stipulated to grant that monarch a larger subsidy for the prosecution of the war. When the terms were laid before the House, it appeared that £1,800,000 were to be paid him for the services of a twelvemonth, of which Holland was to furnish £400,000. The immensity of such a sum, advanced to a prince in whom little or no confidence was reposed, awakened the fears of those who dreaded his duplicity, and that being once in possession of this treasure, he would feel little concern for those from whom he had received it. This apprehension was the more justly founded as he was privately negotiating with the French government at this very time, and preparing for that secession from the confederacy which he had already resolved on. The message was taken into consideration on the 30th, when Mr. Pitt opened the subject to the House, and moved, "That the sum of two million five hundred thousand pounds be granted to make good the engagements which his majesty has entered into with the King of Prussia, as well as to defray any extraordinary expenses which may be incurred for the service of the year 1794, and to take such measures as the exigency of affairs may require; and that such sum be raised by loan or exchequer bills, to be charged upon the first aids to be granted in the next session of parliament."

Mr. Fox said it was necessary for him to say a few words upon the present extraordinary occasion, and the extraordinary manner in which the subject had been brought forward by the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer. The commencement of the speech of the right honourable gentleman appeared to him to be of the most alarming tendency. It held out a system which, if pursued, the wealth of this country, even supposing it to exceed the most sanguine hopes of the most liberal calculator, was comparatively nothing. It seemed to convey this idea, that we were not only to subsidise the King of Prussia, and enable him to carry on his operations in the war whenever he might be tired of so doing at his own expense, but also to bear the whole expense of any other power whenever that power should be in the humour to express the same inclination. The right honourable gentleman had said that if he had the honour of advising the court of Berlin, he had no doubt

which way his opinion would be given; because the existence of the nation depended on the issue of the contest; but that the court of Berlin, from a consideration of the restricted commerce, the limited resources, and the nature and form of the constitution of Prussia (which, by the way, was no proof of its excellence), might have entertained doubts how far it was prudent to remain a principal in this contest; yet, notwithstanding these considerations, the right honourable gentleman would have had no hesitation in advising that court to have continued a principal in the war. The house would recollect, therefore, that it was told by the minister of the King of England that his ally, the King of Prussia, had been so ill-advised that he had taken the timid, the weak, the mean, the wicked, the shameful and scandalous determination, by abandoning the war, of abandoning his own honour; abandoning the interest and safety of his own subjects; this was the amount of that observation.

The right honourable gentleman had not, however, stopped there; he went further and said, since this was the case, since such had been the disgraceful conduct of Prussia, such the timid and pusillanimous result of the councils of the court of Berlin, that Great Britain ought to step forward and press the King of Prussia to proceed contrary to the advice of his counsellors, and engage to bear the expense. What! when Spain, Austria and all the other powers might come to the same resolution? Yes, though all Europe should come to that resolution; for he had said that, from the moment that resolution was taken, it became our interest and our duty to stand in the place of this monarch, and to say to him, "Since you are so ill-advised upon this business, and are determined to withdraw yourself from the contest, let us have your troops and you shall have our money." Mr. Fox said he wished to ask whether the whole of that argument was not applicable to Spain, and to all the other combined powers at present at war with France? This was not an idle speculation, it might soon become a reality. Did the right honourable gentleman know the resources of Austria? Had he anything to say that could give the people of this country any ground to hope that the same difficulty would not be felt by the other powers as had been expressed by Prussia? They had the same circumstances of difficulty with regard to their wealth and commerce; and all, except the Dutch, the same defect with respect to their constitution. Was there any inconvenience felt by the King of Prussia that did not belong, in a great degree, to the emperor, to the King of Spain, and to the other combined

powers? What, then, was to be expected to be the result of all this? Why, that the whole expense would eventually fall on Great Britain. He laid the more stress upon this because the whole force of the right honourable gentleman's argument went to this point. When this came to be coupled with the avowed object of the war, the total destruction of the French government, the situation of this country was dreadful. If we should be of opinion that our existence as a nation depended on that point, as the right honourable gentleman's argument maintained, and the other powers should follow the steps of the King of Prussia, then, for the sake of our own existence, we might be brought to pay for every man and every horse in Europe employed against the French in the present dreadful contest. From our conduct in this war, it would seem as if we had been originally attacked in it, and Prussia not at all; as if France had attacked us in the East and the West Indies; and that the King of Prussia was only at war with France as our ally and assistant. But we all knew the fact to be otherwise, that the King of Prussia originally began it; and, for anything we could now prove to the contrary, it was that very beginning of his which brought on the aggression made by the French on Holland, and which involved us in the contest. What does the King of Prussia say to us upon this occasion? Does he say, "Sorry I am that I have involved my friends in a disagreeable situation; that I have, without intending it, brought upon them the calamities of war; but now that I have done so, I feel myself bound, by every tie of honour and of justice, to double, nay treble, my efforts to get them out of it"? No: the language was this, "I have got Great Britain and Holland into this contest: they are involved in it at this moment from my adventure, and my dominions are more remote and consequently not so immediately affected as theirs: I will discontinue my efforts unless they choose to bear my expenses."

It was hardly possible for the mind of man to conceive a circumstance more odious, and more liable to suspicion of every kind, than this conduct of the King of Prussia: it had in it such materials, and was composed of a mixture of fraud, perfidy and meanness, perfectly new to all modern political history. He had declared it to be our cause and not his; and that he would proceed no further on his own account. So infamous, indeed, had been the conduct of the King of Prussia, that it was impossible for any man of the least prudence to trust that court in anything; and yet this was the court to which the people of this

country were, by the proposal of the minister of the King of England that night, to pay £1,350,000 for carrying on the war which that court itself commenced. What security had we, even after agreeing to pay this money, that the King of Prussia would not say he had met with further difficulties, and make another demand of us, even in the course of this campaign? What confidence could we place in a person who had already betrayed all confidence? How did we know that the success of this application would not give birth to others? Though some might be disposed to blame them, yet in his mind Austria and Spain might come to us with a much better grace, with more honour and with more reason, for a subsidy than Prussia.

All this while, however, it would seem that he was mistaking the thing altogether. It was not Prussia that asked this of us, it was we who requested Prussia to accept it. It seemed as if the existence of Great Britain, as a nation, depended upon this assistance of Prussia. This was called a day of good fortune to England. A day of "joy and satisfaction"! The right honourable gentleman, indeed, seemed struck with the words as soon as he used them, and on that account had endeavoured to explain them away; the explanation, however, was of a curious nature. It seemed that the existence of Great Britain as a nation depended upon this assistance of Prussia; and on this account it was matter of joy that we possessed the means of affording this assistance. It might be compared, not to the case of a man congratulating his friend afflicted with a dreadful disease, that though the amputation of a limb might be painful in the operation, and perhaps doubtful in the event, yet that it would probably save his life; but it resembled the case of a man expressing to that friend his joy and satisfaction that there were no other means of saving his life. It might have been wished that the minister had possessed a better taste than to have selected such a topic as a theme of joy. It should have been spoken of as a scene of painful suffering, such as this country had seldom if ever before felt.

Having said this, he wished to know in what light we were to consider the situation of the King of Prussia in the war at this moment? It was at least extremely ambiguous. Had he ceased to be a principal or not? Indeed, the right honourable gentleman had given no information on that subject; for a good reason, because he had none to give. But he had thought proper to allude to other treaties, and to take what he called a comparative view of them and of the present; and in doing this he had recourse

to a paltry quibble that was unworthy of him. He was surprised that a man, pretending to anything like intellect, or who had a mind of any size, should attempt it. He meant the allusion to the subsidiary treaty with Prussia against the power of Austria in the year 1758, at a time when we were not actually at war with the House of Austria, though it was well known that at that period France was supporting the Empress Queen in Germany, and we engaged, in opposition to them, to espouse the interests of the House of Brandenburg. To revert, therefore, to his question, he would ask whether the King of Prussia was any longer to be regarded as a principal in the war or not? If he was to be regarded as a principal, why was he to be treated with on the footing of a neutral power, or why were we to hire 30,000 men above those he was bound to furnish us with by treaty, merely to enable his Prussian majesty to display his thirst for military glory at our expense?

The next point to be considered was the command of the troops that were to be employed, and for which we were to pay the King of Prussia. The right honourable gentleman had said it was proper they should be under the command of a prince so fond of military glory; now, he did not expect to hear that it was matter of "joy and satisfaction" to the people of this country that when their money was voted for the maintenance of an army some officer of their own was not to have command and control over them: in the common course of common sense, it might have been expected that those who paid them should command them, instead of giving the command to a person who had already given such very indifferent proofs of integrity. In the next place, however, we were informed that this subsidised army was to be employed for British purposes, and that the conquests it might make were to be placed to the advantage of the maritime powers: but a very slight reflection would convince the House that this boasted convenience was productive of no beneficial consequences; but, on the contrary, rather tended to retard than to accelerate the purposes for which the treaty had been made. The great object of all these treaties was to enable the continental powers with whom we were connected to fight their own battles with effect, and to create so powerful a diversion on the side of France as to hinder the full effect of her naval exertions. When this was understood to be the nature and effect of these alliances, every contracting party under the influence of private interest would naturally be disposed to the utmost exertion for the common cause. But we were now so

diffident of the zeal of our allies that we were determined to make it entirely a British and Dutch concern; and yet to employ a monarch to act in our behalf who took no interest in the issue of the enterprises he might undertake. The right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer had been as perspicuous as he usually was in matters of detail in his comparative estimate of the expense of this subsidiary treaty, and those which had been concluded between this country and the other German princes. But without examining into the minutiae of these different treaties, he would only remark that under the stipulations of the treaty of 1787, the King of Prussia was bound to furnish the King of Great Britain and the States of Holland with 32,000 men for the sum of £600,000, so that every shilling of the remaining part of the aggregate sum was appropriated to the payment and sustenance of the additional 30,000 men, which was at the rate of at least twelve pounds per man, exclusive of the £400,000 which were to be paid to the King of Prussia before he began his march; so that upon the whole the sum of £1,600,000 was to be paid to this prince during the first nine months of our alliance with him.

On this part of the subject it was not, however, his intention to dwell any longer, as the terms of this bargain gave rise to inquiries of very inferior moment when compared with those more important suggestions which arose from the general view of the subject, and the character and conduct of the party with whom we had formed this alliance. And here he would ask the House whether the perfidious conduct of the court of Berlin to France and Poland was a sufficient motive to induce us to place implicit confidence in its future adherence to the faith of treaties? Or could we hope to derive much benefit from the protection of the King of Prussia, when his having ruined his own subjects, and exhausted his treasury, were assigned as the principal reasons for affording him this supply of money? He was also under some difficulty as to the extent of the engagements under which the States of Holland had come by the stipulations of this treaty: for, according to its tenor, we were bound, in the first instance, to pay the King of Prussia the whole of this sum, and had only the collateral security of Holland to the amount of £400,000, and the Dutch were only bound to make this payment for the course of the current year; whereas, by a separate article, we had agreed to continue it during the continuance of the war. The right honourable gentleman was, indeed, better acquainted with the resources of the States of the United

Provinces than he could pretend to be; but could he give the House any assurance that they could bear this expense for any longer period than the present campaign, however willing they might be to continue it further? And however that might be, he was compelled to say that amidst the general commiseration which he felt for every nation involved in this contest, he could not help feeling, in a peculiar manner, for the Dutch, because he was persuaded they were forced into the war against their inclination, and because otherwise they would have preserved their tranquillity by a candid and open negotiation. At the commencement of the war we were told that the Dutch were seriously aggrieved by the French. It was contended that we were bound to maintain to the Dutch the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt. But did they complain of the infringement or aggression? Certainly they did not; they would, however, have complained; but such was their situation, and such their awe of the French, that they dared not. Now gentlemen began to speak more openly, and ridiculed those who could be so weak as to believe that these were the grounds of the war. One right honourable gentleman had exclaimed, "A war for the Scheldt! *une guerre de pot de chambre!* Do you really think so? Are you really such fools? Are you such idiots as to think that what was held forth in the king's speech, and in the address of this House in answer to it, as the pretences of the war to be really the objects of the war?" Sir (said Mr. Fox), to tell you the truth, I am not that fool; for I never did think so; and I as much believe that ministers went to war for the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt to the Dutch as they would for the mean object alluded to by the right honourable gentleman.

But was it probable that this measure of subsidising the King of Prussia would be in the end effectual? The different powers in the confederacy were in distressed circumstances already. If report spoke truly, this application for a subsidy to the King of Prussia was made to other powers before it came to us: others had had an opportunity of sharing in the glory of this day, but they had declined the honour; it was reserved exclusively for Great Britain. If report spoke truly, the emperor had the offer of that honour. If report spoke truly, the King of Spain had the same honour. If report spoke truly, they were all unable to defray their own expenses; even the Empress of Russia was in that situation. It was prudent of them not to engage to defray the expenses of others before they were able to discharge their own. It appeared now that Great Britain



was engaged in a contest with such an enemy as the King of Prussia had described the French to be, and that she possessed such allies as, the Dutch excepted, could not afford to furnish one farthing for any external assistance. Even Russia, if she could be considered as an ally, possessed very insufficient finances. If Great Britain, therefore, was to supply all the wants of her allies, if she was to be the only power by whom resources were to be furnished, what wealth, great as he allowed the wealth of this country to be, would be adequate to supply such wants, and to furnish such resources? With those sentiments of the objects of the war which the allies knew the government of this country to possess, it would be needless to higggle about the amount of a subsidy; for as the assistance of the allies was contended to be necessary, they would themselves settle the amount of such subsidies and, according to the arguments of the right honourable gentleman, their demands must be complied with, whatever those demands might be.

After adverting to a part of the right honourable gentleman's speech which, he contended, furnished him with a supposition that the subsidy to Prussia had been foreseen at the period when the budget was opened, but that the minister had been disappointed in the expectation of the amount of the subsidy, Mr. Fox next touched upon the expenses of the war. The present year, he contended, would be a more expensive one than this country had ever experienced. It could be considered, however, only as the first year of the war, and the committee might be assured that the expense would increase every year during the continuance of the war. When the people took this into their consideration, when they considered the great scale on which taxes had been imposed this year, and the load that would be laid upon them next year, when they reflected, too, upon the principle of subsidising all Europe, the present day, he believed, would be to them a day not of "joy and congratulation," but of real national concern. They would see that if the present system were persevered in, this country would at length be reduced to the exhausted state in which Prussia now was, but that, unlike Prussia, she would have no Great Britain to recur to for assistance, no credulous dupe to supply her wants; she would find all her allies equally, perhaps more exhausted than Prussia, who, he believed, was even now not the poorest of them. He for his part thought, perhaps, more highly of the resources of this country than the most learned man who had ever spoken yet or written upon them; but as an honourable friend of his (Mr.

Whitbread) had said, they were like everything else in human affairs, not infinite but finite, they ought not therefore to be opposed to expense that was infinite. He then advised the committee to think of the probable effect on the people of a great accumulation of taxes in the prosecution of an object which appeared to him to be unattainable, namely, success in the war, according to the present avowed object of it—the total destruction of the government of France. For these reasons, he should move by way of amendment to the present resolution, “That the sum of £1,150,000 be inserted instead of £2,500,000.”

The amendment was negatived on a division by 134 against 33, and the original motion agreed to.

May 2, 1794.

The resolution being reported to the House,

Mr. Fox said that after having delivered his sentiments upon this subject in general, he should at present confine himself to a few points. He thought that the House had at least a right to be distinctly informed in what situation the King of Prussia stood with regard to the present treaty; whether merely as a prince who hired out his troops to fight in a cause in the event of which he was not interested; or whether we had entered into this treaty with the King of Prussia as a person interested and engaged as a principal in the war, but who was unable to prosecute it further without pecuniary assistance. In either of these points of view, the present treaty appeared to him ridiculous and improvident. If the King of Prussia was to be regarded in the first light as a prince who hired out troops, was it not a circumstance unprecedented that the command should not be in the persons who subsidised those troops; especially when the troops so hired cost more than troops in a similar situation had ever done?

Mr. Fox said that he should at present confine himself merely to the question of expense; not that he approved of the other parts of the treaty, but because they had been already debated. We were to pay for these 30,000 troops, if we kept them a single year, £1,600,000. If the war lasted another year, certainly the expense would be somewhat less, because the sum of £400,000 for outfit and return would be spread over two years, and then it would be £1,400,000 per annum. If for four years it would be £1,300,000, spreading the expense of outfit and return over the whole time, which, upon comparison, would be more expensive

than the same number of Hessians or Hanoverians. It was to be remembered, also, that we retained the entire command and disposition of the latter; but of these Prussian troops we were to have neither command nor disposition; and the execution of all the projects, though for British purposes, was left in the King of Prussia's hands. If we looked at any other treaty, we should find that the price to be paid under this present treaty was larger than we had ever paid for the assistance of troops over which we had had the entire command; and as we were to have no command whatever over them, the price was enormous indeed. On the other hand, if we considered them as the troops of a prince engaged in the war, we must naturally look to the late treaty entered into with Sardinia. By that treaty 50,000 men were to be supplied for the support of the common cause, for which we paid but £200,000. If we were to pay in proportion to this subsidy for 30,000 troops, the expense would be no more than £120,000; but, instead of that sum, we were to pay £1,600,000. In 1756 we subsidised Frederick the Great, uncle to the present King of Prussia: let us compare the terms of that treaty with the present: he was to furnish 150,000 men, for which we were to pay £670,000. According to this rate we should pay for 30,000 troops, to be furnished now, about £135,000, instead of the enormous sum of £1,600,000. For gentlemen were to consider that this sum was not paid for 62,000 men; because in that number were included the 32,000 men stipulated for by the former treaty of 1788. Waiving that consideration for a moment, for the sake of argument, let them compare these treaties, and see how they stood. When the £600,000 to be paid under the treaty of 1788 was added to the £1,600,000 it made a sum of £2,200,000 which we were to pay instead of the sum of £220,000, which should be paid at the rate of the treaty with the late King of Prussia; or £240,000, which was the extent of what should be paid at the rate of the late treaty with Sardinia. Instead of paying £220,000 as in one case, or £240,000 as in the other, we profusely squandered away the enormous sum of £2,200,000; so that in the one calculation this treaty, as compared with others of a similar nature, was in this latter statement ten to one against us: in the former, which was the true statement, it was fourteen to one against us.

But from the ambiguous situation of the King of Prussia arose other difficulties. When the question between us and that monarch was a question of expense, he said, "I am not so much interested in the event of this war as you are; you shall

therefore bear the whole of my expense." But when it became a question of who should command the troops, or to what objects they were to be directed, he would immediately say, "I am a principal in the war, and equally interested in its consequences with you; I can as well judge the effect of its operation to our mutual benefit; and will have the sole command over my own troops." Such conduct was really intolerable: it was a tricking, shifting, shuffling behaviour in this prince, acting, no doubt, by the advice of his council; but that was no reason why the people of Great Britain should become the dupes of such knavery. He, for his part, wished to have the situation of the King of Prussia fairly stated: if he were a mere hirer of men, never was there such audacious, impudent conduct as to insist on the command and disposal of the troops he had let out for hire. If, on the other hand, he was a principal in the war whom we subsidised, the present treaty, compared with others of a similar nature, was, according to one calculation, fourteen to one, and even according to the most favourable ten to one, against this country. He therefore hoped that gentlemen would a little consider how far they could answer to themselves and to their constituents (he did not mean their particular constituents, but all their constituents in the general sense of the word, the people at large) for having in a few days voted such an enormous sum of money, without any possible opportunity of conversing with them on the subject. He wished to ask them if they could consider themselves entitled, by such conduct, to the character of faithful stewards? It was too much that the wealth of this country should be so profligately squandered to answer the unprincipled rapacity, or contemptible finesse, of any prince or court in Europe.

The resolution was agreed to by the House.

## KING'S MESSAGE RESPECTING SEDITIOUS PRACTICES —SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT

*May 13, 1794.*

ON the 12th of May the following message from the king was delivered to the House of Commons by Mr. Secretary Dundas:

“ G.R.

“ His majesty having received information that the seditious practices which have been for some time carried on by certain societies in London, in correspondence with societies in different parts of the country, have lately been pursued with increased activity and boldness, and have been avowedly directed to the object of assembling a pretended general convention of the people, in contempt and defiance of the authority of parliament, and on principles subversive of the existing laws and constitution, and directly tending to the introduction of that system of anarchy and confusion which has fatally prevailed in France, has given directions for seizing the books and papers of the said societies in London, which have been seized accordingly; and these books and papers appearing to contain matter of the greatest importance to the public interest, his majesty has given orders for laying them before the House of Commons; and his majesty recommends it to the House to consider the same, and to take such measures thereupon as may appear to be necessary for effectually guarding against the further prosecution of those dangerous designs, and for preserving to his majesty's subjects the enjoyment of the blessings derived to them by the constitution happily established in these kingdoms.”

On the following day, Mr. Secretary Dundas having presented to the House the books and papers referred to in the said message, Mr. Pitt moved, “ That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message, and to assure his majesty that this House will immediately take into their serious consideration the subject recommended to them in his majesty's message, and will adopt such steps as may appear to them to be necessary on a matter of such high importance to the safety of his majesty's dominions.”

Mr. Fox said he did not rise up for the purpose of opposing the present motion, as he conceived it to be in some sort a thing of course, but merely to say a few words preliminary to his acceding to it; and he was the less inclined to oppose it as he conceived that his assent in no way precluded him from exercising his right to discuss the various subjects referred to in the message when they came before the House; and that the questions, Whether

the object before them was properly fit for their investigation? What the means were by which the papers were procured? Whether the seizure of them was constitutional and legal? And whether the mode of collecting the information respecting them were justifiable? were still as open to the investigation and discussion of himself and every other member as if they refused their assent *in limine* to the address. But what he chiefly wished to remark was, that if the papers were sealed up, and their contents therefore unknown to the House, he thought it would be rashness to refer them to a secret committee, unless precedents were first adduced upon which to ground such a measure; for of all modes of proceeding, the steps which had been adopted in the present case seemed to him to be those which it was most necessary to watch over with vigilance.

The address passed *nem. con.*, as did also a motion that the books and papers be referred to a committee. Mr. Pitt next moved, "That the said committee be a committee of secrecy."

Mr. Fox said he hoped that the right honourable gentleman who made the motion would either support it by some precedent, or demonstrate that there existed such a distinction between this and former cases as should induce the House to have recourse to new modes of proceeding unsanctioned by precedent. With regard to the argument urged by the right honourable gentleman in support of his proposed mode of inquiry, namely, the fear of discovery defeating the objects of it, he would only say that those objects, not being sufficiently defined or expressed, could form no ground of argument. Was the object prosecution? Prosecution was already in the hands of the crown, who seemed desirous of calling upon the House to take their part in it. He wished to know what the object of the crown was. He could not suppose it was impeachment; for though he would always maintain the inquisitorial right of that House, he thought that impeachment could not properly come from the crown. He could not, therefore, see why the committee should be a secret committee; yet if, as he had said before, the right honourable gentleman could either cite precedents on the one hand, or mention on the other grounds sufficient to warrant a deviation from all rule, he would not object to it.

The motion being put and carried, Mr. Pitt moved, "That the number of the said committee be twenty-one."

Mr. Fox said he had no objection to the number; twenty-one was, perhaps, as proper as any other; but there were some things

which he wished to know respecting this transaction. He was particularly desirous to be informed what had been the mode of obtaining those papers? For there was an ambiguity in the words of the message which left him at a loss to determine respecting that particular; and he therefore wished to know on which of the grounds stated in it the seizure of the papers had been made? Was it only on the ground of the seditious practices, or on an allegation that the persons implicated had entered so far on the execution of the plan of a general convention as to be guilty of an overt act of treason? As a member of the House of Commons, and a friend to the constitution, he respected the opinions of parliament; and it was a resolution standing on the journals of that House, that seizing the papers of a person accused of a libel was illegal, founded on the principle that such an extreme step should not be taken unless there was an actual allegation for treason or felony. He therefore insisted that by the resolutions of that House he was warranted in saying that seizing papers for seditious practices, or for anything short of treason, was illegal. If, then, the present seizure was made on an allegation for seditious practices alone, it was, according to the declared sense of the House, illegal: if otherwise, it might be legal. He therefore wished that the House was informed which it was. The case he alluded to occurred, he said, in April 1766. It was discussed and determined on the generality of the warrant. He therefore pressed ministers to give an answer to the question he had put, as he was averse to countenance anything that might militate against the resolutions of that House.

Mr. Secretary Dundas said that what the substantial grounds of seizure were the House would judge on inquiry; but he would at present solve the right honourable gentleman's doubts by telling him that the warrants were grounded on allegations for treasonable practices. The motion was then agreed to.

*May 16, 1794.*

This day Mr. Pitt presented to the House the first report from the committee of secrecy. He stated at great length his view of its contents. It appeared to the committee, he said, that a plan had been formed, and was in forwardness, to assemble a convention of the people; which was to assume the character and powers of a national representation, and to supersede the authority of parliament. A mere parliamentary reform was not the real aim of these societies: their papers would make it evident that they had been, during the two last years, leagued in a correspondence with other societies in this and a neighbouring country; from which the clearest

inference might be drawn that a convention such as described had been their original view, and that they were only waiting a fit opportunity to realise it. The report, he said, would show that a correspondence had subsisted between these societies and the Jacobin club; that they had sent delegates to the convention at Paris which had formally received them; and that when the French Jacobin government commenced the war against Great Britain, these societies had to the utmost of their power acted an hostile part, manifested an adherence to the same cause, assumed their expressions and appellations, and laboured to disseminate their principles. It was chiefly in the manufacturing towns their efforts were greatest, from the number of ignorant and discontented people with which they abounded. Notwithstanding their endeavours to conceal their intentions at times, they had not been able to disguise them at others. In one of their letters, that to the society at Norwich, they plainly intimated that they looked for no reform but from the convention they had in view, advising, however, a continuance of petitions for reform as a cover to their designs. They had the audacity to style the Scottish convention a legal representation of the people; and to justify those whom the law had sentenced to punishment. The condemnation of these men was the signal at which they had agreed to come finally to an issue upon the point whether the law should frighten them into compliance, or whether they should oppose it with its own weapons, force and power. This society, however despicable, and consisting of the lowest of the people, had found the means of a most expeditious and extensive increase: it counted thirty divisions in London only, some of them amounting to six hundred individuals: and it kept a regular correspondence with many others, systematically distributed through various parts of the kingdom, particularly in the manufacturing towns. It had audaciously assumed the task of watching over the transactions of parliament, and of limiting boundaries to its powers, threatening destruction if it dared to transgress them. It was no longer than six weeks, he said, since the corresponding society had laid before the constitutional society a scheme for calling together a convention of the people, manifestly for the purpose of dissolving the government and lodging the supreme power in their own hands. This was to have been executed in a few weeks. The addresses they had drawn up to this effect were circulated with the utmost care and expedition: they had chosen a central spot (Sheffield) in order to facilitate the assembling of delegates from all parts; and every society was requested to transmit an estimate of its numbers, that the strength of the combined societies might be exactly known. These wretches, said Mr. Pitt, expected, by following the precedents of the Jacobin principles and practices, to arrive at the same degree of power. They had, no longer since than the 14th of April, held a consultation, wherein the members of every department of the state had been most scandalously vilified as unworthy and incompetent to hold their official situations. The report, he also said, mentioned that arms had been actually procured and distributed by those societies. In consequence, therefore, of the informations contained in this report, he would move for a suspension of the *habeas corpus* act, as



particularly necessary when a conspiracy existed in the heart of the country. Mr. Pitt concluded with moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to empower his majesty to secure and detain such persons as his majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his person and government."

Mr. Fox rose and observed that, however unpleasant it was for him to attend that day in the House on account of indisposition, he had thought it his duty to do so, on being told that the report of the committee of secrecy was to be made; for in the course of that report he had expected to have heard something new, and something that might call for the immediate attention of the House. He had listened with all the attention he was master of to the report; and he must confess he never was more surprised in his life than that those who framed the report, men of such talents and character, should have thought it necessary to recommend so sudden, so violent, so alarming a remedy as that which had been proposed; a proposal grounded upon facts that had been, all of them, notorious for years. He was aware there was some part of it which stated to be something new; but of that he should say something presently. He was surprised, however, that the committee should call the attention of the House so solemnly for the purpose of telling them that two years ago a society had come to certain resolutions, which were published in every newspaper in the kingdom; to tell the House in a pompous, public, formal manner what had been presented to the national convention of France, and what answers had been given; to inform the House in detail what administration had seen passing before them day after day, and then to call on the House for its immediate consideration of the probable effect of such events, and of the necessity of putting an end, by the most violent of all means, to what had so long been suffered to pass in silence. The report, however, was not a mere report of these stale, ridiculous, contemptible facts; it stated also an inference arising out of them. He could not arrive so readily as the right honourable gentleman at a conclusion upon these points, taking them all to be exactly as they were related. He begged leave to differ from him and from the whole of the committee upon that subject: he thought the inference of the committee unfair: he would go further, he thought that taking, for the sake of argument, the inference to be fair, that would not warrant the measure proposed. He should not go into the question whether these persons had acted consistently or not; that was not matter for consideration then; through the whole course of the business

they had wished for a convention for the purpose of legally obtaining a parliamentary reform. The convention at Edinburgh had been taken notice of; that convention, in all its proceedings published in the newspapers, had uniformly stated their views to be not to oppose the power of government, but to seek redress of grievances. With regard to conventions of this sort, was the right honourable gentleman prepared to say they were seditious? He did not know that the right honourable gentleman was a member of any former convention, but he himself certainly was a member of one in the year 1780; they were chosen as delegates, and had several meetings in London and Westminster afterwards; and if that was illegal, all he could say was that they carried on their proceedings with great imprudence, for they went on in the most public manner, and held correspondence publicly with societies in Yorkshire and other places; they presented the result of their labours to the House; the House refused to recognise them in such a character as delegates, but said that they had a right to petition as individuals, and therefore received their petition. He mentioned this merely to show that such a convention was legal. Never till lately had such a measure been thought either against the letter or the spirit of the constitution. If it had been illegal, the minister had been scandalously negligent, and so had many others. A scandalous negligence must have attended the obtaining a free constitution for Ireland. A scandalous negligence alone could have suffered the Roman Catholics of Ireland to obtain what was lately granted to them, for it was by a convention they had succeeded in obtaining their late privileges. His majesty had received them in the capacity of delegates, and granted their request. Happy was it for them, and happy for a great part of the rest of the world, that such an event had happened. His majesty had received them with that benignity which belonged to his character; but would it be contended that the Roman Catholics would have gained this object if it had not been for a convention? He, indeed, well knew what extraordinary things were attempted by those who were supported by great numbers. Let gentlemen look to the rejection of the Roman Catholic petition: in the first application of the Roman Catholics to parliament there were only about five-and-twenty in its favour; but how differently were they received the next year, when they were so supported, and when they appointed a convention of delegates! After that, would any man say that he had a doubt of the means by which this had been effected? But when he

made this remark, was he consequently saying that the proposed convention in the present case would be meritorious? No such thing; he was giving no opinion upon that subject; he only said that it would be dangerous for that House to declare its illegality. There was not any other charge against these persons than that they might of their own authority make an attempt to alter the form of parliament; now he asked if any gentleman was prepared to say that that very convention would not apply to parliament for a parliamentary reform?

With respect to the number of these persons, he really believed that it was not very considerable. That they had increased since their first formation he had no doubt; for it would be strange if the measures of administration had occasioned no dissatisfaction in the country; it would be wonderful in our history indeed if a war of two years, carried on upon such principles and attended with such disastrous circumstances, had not excited a spirit of discontent and resentment against the authors of those calamities. He would go further, for he would not be intimidated; many internal circumstances, many things had taken place, to which he could never subscribe; the punishments lately inflicted in Scotland were of the same nature; he did not approve of any of these things; on the contrary, he agreed with those who thought these proceedings an abuse of the power of government, an abuse of law, an abuse of justice, an outrage to humanity, and likely to tend to alarm every man in England who had the least esteem for the principles of liberty; since, if these proceedings should become general, there was an end of all liberty.

With regard to the nature of the convention which had been so much talked of, Mr. Fox said he must make one observation. Against whom, he would ask, was this thunder of government levelled? Was it against men of influence? No. Such a convention could have no influence, and it would be ridiculous in government to stop them. The constitution had too many admirers, had too many defenders, to have any fears from the attempts of such men. But if government did really believe that they meant to form a government of themselves, could they be so mad, so absurd, as to suppose that they would be joined by any body sufficiently numerous to create any serious alarm? Surely not. For his part, he solemnly believed that if a hundred men were to assemble together and presume to dictate laws to the rest of the community, there could not be found another hundred who would be willing to join them. This constitution had too many defenders, too many well-wishers, to fear any such

paltry attempts to overturn it. But he should suppose this convention assembled by Mr. Hardy and Mr. Adams, and that they entertained the views ascribed to them; he would then say that the measure now proposed was of infinitely greater mischief to the people than that which it proposed to remedy. Were the House aware of the extent of this measure? It was no less than giving to the executive authority absolute power over the personal liberty of every individual in the kingdom. It might be said that ministers would not abuse that power. He must own for his part that he did not feel himself very comfortable under that reflection; every man who talked freely; every man who detested, as he did from his heart, this war, might be, and would be, in the hands and at the mercy of ministers. Living under such a government, and being subject to insurrection, comparing the two evils, he confessed he thought the evil they were pretending to remedy was less than the one they were going to inflict by the remedy itself. We were going to give up the very best part of our constitution; and that which every man was entitled to do, and which he was now doing—delivering the sentiments of his heart upon the affairs of government, for the benefit of the public, would be at an end at once. Might he not then say that there was an end of the constitution of England?

But was there any instance on such an occasion of such a measure? Such a measure had been adopted in the reign of King William. Was that similar to the present reign? The same measure had been adopted in the time of the rebellion in 1715, and again in 1745. Were the circumstances then similar to the present? At that time there was an army in the kingdom in favour of a popish prince, claiming a right to the throne; and that too, if we were to credit report, at a time when the people were a great deal divided in opinion as to the propriety of the succession of the house of Hanover. Was there any such prince now? Were there any such circumstances now? Nothing like it. Here we saw a number of individuals without arms, without means of any kind whatever, talking of a reform in parliament. Such being the circumstances, he must say that the House would betray its duty to the constitution if it should agree to the present measure. Having said thus much he had but one thing more to submit. He was exceedingly surprised at the precipitation with which this business was brought forward; he conceived that a few days could make no difference, and that the right honourable gentleman could have no objection to a call of the House on a question of such magnitude. Was the danger so

imminent that a number of members must be deprived the privilege of delivering their sentiments upon so alarming an exigence? Could one fortnight make such a difference? Was the danger so great as to exclude all possibility of deliberation, and compel the House to run headlong into the snare which the timidity or temerity of the minister had prepared for them? For his part, detesting equally the endeavour to intimidate as the endeavour to enslave, he must feel it his duty to oppose the leave for bringing in the bill. He saw that a fancied terror had intruded itself upon the faculties of several members, and that they were prepared to sacrifice their duty to notions of supposed expediency and groundless alarm. Having an invincible objection to every species of delusion, he for one should enter his decided protest against the proceeding about to be adopted. He saw this measure in so dreadful a point of view that he should consider himself as betraying his constituents and the public if he did not oppose it in every stage. It was a measure that went to overturn the very corner-stone of the constitution, and which surrendered to ministers the personal freedom of every man in the kingdom.

The motion for leave to bring in the bill was supported by Mr. Burke, and opposed by Mr. Martin, Mr. Lambton, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Grey, Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Sheridan. Mr. Grey reprobated the motion in the strongest terms. He expressed his great surprise that any measure of any sort could be founded on those trumpery papers alluded to in the report, all of which had been published long ago, and, if worthy of notice, ought to have been attended to last year, when at the meeting of parliament there seemed to some gentlemen to be so much cause for alarm. On a division the numbers were:

<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS {	Lord Mulgrave }	201.—	NOES {
	Mr. Buxton }		Mr. Grey }
			Mr. Sheridan }
			39.

Leave was accordingly given to bring in the bill. After which Mr. Grey moved, "That this House be called over on this day fortnight." He remarked with much severity on the indecent haste with which the bill was pressed through the House. Even the gentlemen who voted for the bill, he was well assured, were not aware of the extent of the measure until they heard it proposed by the chancellor of the exchequer. Mr. Pitt said that, as the bill required all possible despatch, he would oppose the motion as calculated but for vexatious delay.

Mr. Fox supported the motion of his honourable friend. He could not but notice, he said, the tone of exultation in which the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer dwelt on a

measure which, if actually necessary, should be noticed by all as a serious calamity. He dared that right honourable gentleman—he dared the whole committee—to say that there was any such thing in this country as an armed insurrection. If there was not, he contended that the delay of one week could make no material difference as to the object in view: if the object was punishment there must be guilt, and the present laws were fully adequate to that: if it was merely to prevent the escape of a few guilty persons from justice that this unprecedented measure was called for, he maintained that it was scandalous for a single moment to surrender the liberties of the whole kingdom on such an account. He lamented that the old-established laws known to the constitution had not been applied to the evil, if any existed; for it was an infamous libel on the constitution to say that it was only able to maintain itself in times of peace and tranquillity, but must be surrendered in times of danger and difficulty. He wished to know for what length of time this suspension was to continue, or how it could possibly be necessary? At a time when we were engaged in a war upon such honourable principles that it was approved by the whole kingdom—at a time when there was the most popular administration that ever governed in this kingdom, who had on every occasion a majority of ten to one—was it at such a time that we found it necessary to suspend the habeas corpus act, from the apprehension of an insurrection in the heart of the kingdom? He contended that the pretences brought forward to support this measure were the most flimsy and barefaced he had ever witnessed, and the measure itself the most daring and impudent. It was true that, since terror was the order of the day (to use a French mode of expression), those opinions might be awhile stifled, but they would but rankle in secret; curses would follow, “not loud but deep,” and what might be the final event no man could say! After this measure should have passed, he doubted whether it would be of any utility for those who acted with him to continue their opposition in that House. This was the moment for the House to pause and deliberate before they gave up that privilege which might decide whether it would be worth the while of any member to attend a discussion within those walls.

*Tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori.*

If violences should succeed, he should feel the consolation of having done everything in his power to avert the impending evil from his country—that to his latest moments would be his

consolation; and he did not think in case of any disturbance that one head in that House would be more secure than another.

The House divided: Yeas 32: Noes 201. After which the bill was immediately brought in by Mr. Pitt, read a first and second time, committed, and at three o'clock on Saturday morning reported, and ordered to be read a third time at three that afternoon, if the bill should be then engrossed.

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*May 17, 1794.*

On Saturday afternoon the House met again, when the motion for the third reading of the bill being put, it was strenuously opposed by Mr. Grey, Mr. Lambton, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Curwen, Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Fox; and supported by Mr. Canning, Mr. Windham, Mr. Dundas, Mr. Pitt and others. Mr. Windham in the course of his speech observed that it could not be reasonably denied that sufficient proofs had been adduced of a conspiracy to overthrow the constitution. The principle of universal suffrage, he said, was alone a source of the most lamentable evils, as France could amply testify. The mild conduct of government having failed of putting a stop to the licentious proceedings of ill-intentioned individuals, it was time to employ severe methods; and if those did not produce the end proposed, stronger and severer measures still must be adopted. The evils threatened must be obviated at all events; and if the laws in being were inadequate to that purpose, others more effectual ought to be framed. As soon as Mr. Windham had sat down,

Mr. Fox rose and said that he should not have troubled the House with any further observations on the subject of the present bill, after having given his opinion so fully upon it the night before, but for the very extraordinary topics which had been introduced by his right honourable friend (Mr. Windham). If he had expressed himself warmly on the subject of that bill, he begged leave to say, after the most mature reflection, that he did not repent of such warmth. He desired to be considered as repeating and confirming every assertion. It was a bill characteristic of the worst times, and which, he feared, predicted much calamity to the country. We were hurrying into that most dangerous and alarming predicament which would produce either the horrors of anarchy and confusion on the one side, or that despotism of monarchy which Mr. Hume called "the euthanasia of the British constitution" on the other; in either of which cases he saw the complete extinction of liberty; and he dreaded to think what must be the shocking alternative which he, and others who loved the true principles of the constitution, must be reduced to in the impending struggle. The bill was characteristic of those violent times when, instead of being guided by reason, we were to be put

under the dominion of wild passion, and when our pretended alarms were to be made the pretexts for destroying the first principles of the very system which we affected to revere. Every warm expression, therefore, which he had used the night before, he now upon reflection justified and repeated; and even yet, while a moment was left him, he deprecated the horror of passing the bill into a law.

Mr. Fox said he would pass over all the lesser topics of the speech of his right honourable friend in order to come to that most portentous part of it, which had made an impression upon his mind never to be effaced, and which foretold the destruction of the British constitution. It was an argument, upon which if the present measure was really founded, that he hoped would even yet make the House pause before they proceeded further. His right honourable friend had said that to the existing evil of the Jacobinical doctrines remedies ought to be applied in gradation. From mild remedies he would proceed to remedies less mild, from less mild to severe, and through all the degrees of severity. What by this argument was he to think of the present measure but that it was only one step in his ladder, and that if that should fail of producing its effect, he had still remedies more severe in reserve? The right honourable gentleman had tried already his gentle remedies; the alien bill was an anodyne, the treasonable correspondence bill was also a gentle medicine; and as these remedies had failed of producing the proper effect, nay, as by the king's speech it was said that, notwithstanding these measures, the evil still existed with increased malignity, he was about to try this severer remedy; with the declared intention that if this should also fail he had still more violent measures to pursue. When the experiment should have been made, and proved, like all the former, to have failed of producing the effects expected from it, he desired to know what must be the answer to this question if, next year, enough of the constitution should remain to enable him to put a question to the right honourable gentleman in his place—what would be done beyond this? After suspending the habeas corpus act, what would he do more? Would he prohibit all meetings of the people so as to debar them from all discussions on political subjects, and prevent all free intercourse between man and man? And when this should be found ineffectual, would he give to ministers the power of making arbitrary imprisonment perpetual? Would he still further go on in the exact and horrid imitation of the men who now held France in anarchy, and establish a revolutionary tribunal, or what, perhaps, he would



call an anti-revolutionary tribunal? Where would he stop? What limit did he propose to make? Was there no end of his plan of securities, until he should accomplish the end of annihilating all doctrines that he might affect to dread, or destroy all the disaffected spirits which he might pretend existed in the country? It was of consequence to the House to see what they were doing. They were told that what they had done was not enough; and that even this might not be enough. Good God! what was to be done after this? Under the colour of pretended alarms, were they to go on to an unlimited infringement and demolition of all the strongest and most beautiful parts of the constitution? The right honourable gentleman was offended at the comparison that had been made between the conduct of ministers and their adherents and the conduct of the present rulers in France, and he had with great felicity quoted from Captain Fluellan the comparison between the river in Macedon and the river in Monmouth, because there was salmon in both. But with all respect for his wit, the right honourable gentleman must be content to incur the imputation of similarity when his own conduct and that of the rulers of France were so similar. They had taken great pains to throw odium on the pretended designs of a convention on account of the word convention. Let gentlemen look at their own conduct, and see if it was not in substance the same as that of the present rulers in France. What was the conduct of those rulers? From day to day they circulated stories of alarms and plots and conspiracies and insurrections among the people, to inflame and agitate their minds, and to spread panic and terror over the whole country, that they might take advantage of their fears and obtain unlimited power, to be exercised in carrying on and confirming that very terror. They inspired the double alarm of danger from conspiracy and danger from the exercise of their own unlimited power, exerted as it every day was in the most shocking murders, with hardly the aspect or form of judicial trial. What was the conduct of the ministers here? Precisely in the same manner they circulated stories of alarms and conspiracies to fill the public mind with fear and, to use the jargon of the French, to make terror the order of the day. By spreading these false and idle alarms they succeeded in obtaining powers destructive of the constitution, which, as in France, were to be exercised with such inhuman rigour as to keep the country in double awe and, by fostering indignation and discontent, give rise again to new jealousies which would afford occasion for still further stretches of power.

Thus they followed the example set them by the men whose doctrines they pretended to abhor with the most shocking fidelity. Every part of their conduct was built on the French model, and he dreaded that it would be productive too certainly of the same effects.

The precise question for the House was to compare the danger with the remedy. The pretended danger was, as we might collect from the documents that had been laid upon the table—documents that everyone had seen published in the newspapers—that there was in certain societies a tendency to a convention. Whether the word convention was a bugbear that was to be held up to terrify their imaginations he knew not; but it was of consequence to inquire a little into the nature of the thing, and not to be startled at names. A convention, he supposed, meant no other than a meeting of the people; and if that meeting was for the discussion of any subject of general interest in a legal and peaceable way, there certainly was nothing in such meeting that could either call for or justify any such measure as the present. To a convention that had for its purpose to overawe the legislature, and to obtain any object, either of universal suffrage or other wild and impracticable theory, he should certainly not choose to give his countenance. But if there was a convention either of individuals for themselves, or of delegates of towns and districts, for the purpose of striving, by petitions and addresses to the three branches of the legislature, to put an end to the present most ruinous and unprovoked war, he should certainly neither be ashamed nor afraid—at least not until after the present bill had passed into a law—to attend, and be a member of such convention. But what was to be dreaded from even the convention that was threatened which the laws of the country were not of themselves sufficient to check? If they meant, by their intended convention, to overawe the government of this country at a moment of such unprecedented strength as the government now possessed, he would say that they were fit for Bedlam, and for Bedlam only. So perfectly and entirely was it possible for magistrates, in every part of the kingdom, to execute the laws that he would venture to say that if any man, or men, at such convention committed any illegal act, he or they might be sent to prison, and tried for the offence as securely as if no convention existed.

The danger, then, called for no remedy; and it was not because any such remedy was necessary that the present bill was introduced. It was to keep alive the passions of the people; it

was to agitate and alarm their minds, to put them under the dominion of terror, and take from them the exercise of their rational faculties. Ministers knew well the dangerous predicament in which they stood: they had weakly and, as he thought, wickedly involved the country in a most disastrous war; every day plunged them deeper and deeper in the fatality which they had brought upon their country; they saw no hopes of extricating the nation from it with honour, nor of proceeding in it with success, and they dreaded all reflection on the subject: they knew that they had no safety but in depriving the people of repose; they knew that if the alarm should be suspended for a moment, and if men were allowed time and leisure for the exercise of their understandings, the war, and the principles on which it was undertaken, would be scrutinised and discussed. They dreaded to encounter so hazardous a trial, and all their measures had been directed to keep alive an incessant commotion, so as to suspend every operation of the public intellect. For this reason a subscription had been set on foot; he said "for this reason," because ministers had been open enough to acknowledge that it was not for money. It was, they had declared, to excite the zeal of the people. Zeal was one of those fervent emotions which would be favourable to their views, and which, while it lasted, would keep them from examining the objects of it. But the subscription, he supposed, had not succeeded to the hoped-for extent; that zeal which they had aroused was not equal, apparently, to the occasion, and they now strove to awaken a more powerful emotion, that of terror. In short, it was a government of passion, a government in which ministers strove to lull asleep all the sober operations of the mind, and to awaken only the fears and terrors of the heart. Reason they dreaded, for reason was their enemy. It was well said by a philosopher of great character that all men dreaded reason who acted against reason; and certainly it was natural and in the order of things that animals, which by their practice counteracted the natural course and dictates of reason, should shrink and dread as their enemy those who seemed to be guided by its wisdom. ~

It had been said that the secret committee had been spoken of in terms not the most respectful. He, for one, certainly could not speak of some members of that committee without expressing his high respect and regard for them. He was not among those who gave up their personal friendships on account of differences in political opinion. A noble lord near him (Lord George Cavendish) had, in very affecting terms, deplored the circumstance

that in the present moment he differed from men so near and dear to his heart as to make him feel it like differing from himself; so he might say that for some of those persons, though he had not ties of consanguinity, he felt so sincere a regard and so poignant a regret at differing from them as to make it like a parting from himself. His early habits of respect, his warm affections, all led him to this feeling; but the present was not a time to compliment men, or to shrink from the severe duties which conscience imposed, from recollections of tenderness and esteem. He must say, then, however highly he regarded some individuals of that committee, that it was made up of two characters; men who were dupes themselves, or men who were willing to dupe others. Their whole report was trifling and inconsequential; it told nothing which every man did not know before; for the last assertion about arming, the right honourable gentleman had said, was merely supplemental, and was not to be taken as a component part of the report. Then what did the report consist of? Of a collection of papers which had all been seen by the public and which, if they did contain any danger, was not a danger of that day. It was known by everyone, and steps might have been taken on the subject months ago. Their avowed intention was to procure a system of universal suffrage; and this the right honourable gentleman said was what had destroyed France. However freely he might be disposed to agree with him as to the wildness and impracticability of universal suffrage, he must doubt of the fact of its having been the cause of the destruction of France. On the contrary, universal suffrage was to be considered rather as the effect than the cause; for the book of the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Burke), which had produced such enormous and fatal effects in England, had charged upon the French that they had not acted upon their own principles, but had narrowed the suffrage in a way totally inconsistent with their own doctrine. But were we to argue theoretically or practically from the example of France which the right honourable gentleman so incessantly presented to them? Was every man who had liberty in his mouth to be considered as a traitor, merely because liberty had been abused in France, and had been carried to the most shocking licentiousness? He would venture to say that if this was to be the consequence, fatal indeed would it be for England! If the love of liberty was not to be maintained in England; if the warm admiration of it was not to be cherished in the hearts of the people; if the maintenance of liberty was not to be inculcated

as a duty; if it was not to be revered as our chief good, as our boast and pride and richest inheritance;—what else had we worthy of our care? Liberty was the essence of the British constitution. King, lords, commons and courts of judicature were but the forms; the basis of the constitution was liberty, that grand and beautiful fabric, the first principle of which was government by law, and which this day they were going to suspend.

He called upon the right honourable gentleman to say whether there was any true parallel between the constitution of this country and the old government of France that we should dread the same effects from Jacobinical doctrines which that despotic government had suffered? France had no habeas corpus act: France had no system of respect for the liberties of the people; it had not been because France had held out a mild and equal government by law that France had been overcome by the doctrines of Jacobinism. On the contrary, it was a fair conjecture that if France had had a habeas corpus act and had not suspended it, if France had upon every occasion respected the rights and the liberties of the people, the doctrines of Jacobinism would not have prevailed over the established power. He stated this as not an improbable conjecture; he did not presume to lay much stress upon such conjecture, but it was material to the right honourable gentleman in supporting his argument to prove that the old government of France had been overthrown because there was a want of power; for his argument was that we must go on from measure to measure until we should arm ministers with sufficient power to resist and overcome all innovation, and until they had rooted out all appearance of Jacobinical principles. The despotism of Louis XVI. had not been sufficient to save France from Jacobin doctrines. Were we to go beyond that despotism to give ourselves greater security than France possessed? The doctrines of the right honourable gentleman went to the utter extinction of every vestige of the constitution; and such was the effect of his principle that it was impossible to limit the progress of his remedies; they were all to be hot medicines; he did not admit the possibility of doing any good by the contrary practice. If one hot medicine failed a hotter only was to be tried; and thus he was to proceed, through all the race of the most powerful stimulants, instead of trying what the opposite course of cooling mixtures and gentle anodynes might produce. What the nature of his provocatives was he had not condescended to state. He had alluded to his former opinion,

that if the laws of this country were not sufficient for the suppression of seditious practices, the laws of Scotland, not as they really existed, but as they were stated to exist, should be introduced; and so he supposed one of his plans was that juries should decide by a majority instead of deciding with unanimity; and that men should be punished with sentences more rigorous than immediate death; that was, should be sent to die far away from all the civilised world merely on account of a political opinion. And these severities were to be introduced—for what? Because any great body of people were disaffected to the state? No, no such thing! It was the boast of ministers and their adherents that every part of the country was most strictly united in love and attachment to the constitution. But all this was to be introduced because some low persons, without property and without consideration in the country, were found to entertain opinions about a parliamentary reform that were thought to be dangerous. How long would it take to eradicate these opinions from the minds of these men? Did they mean to keep them all in confinement under this bill? They would be forward, he supposed, to disclaim any such intention. What did they mean, then, to do? To suspend one of the grandest principles of the constitution of England until there should be found no men within the kingdom tinctured with discontent, or who cherished the design of reform. If they meant to suspend the habeas corpus act until such time, there was an end of it in this country. And what did they declare by this to all mankind? That there was no period when it would be possible to restore to the country that grand and inestimable right; that the constitution of England was fit only for an Utopian society where all men lived in perfect concord, without one jarring sentiment, without one discontented feeling; but that it was utterly unfit for a world of mortal and mixed men, unfit for any state of society that ever did exist upon the face of the earth, or that was ever likely to exist. Never, never then, upon this doctrine, was it probable that we should again recover this most essential part of the British constitution; for it was not the will of Providence that society should be formed so perfect and unmixed, so free from all passions, as to meet the ideas upon which it was contended that the constitution of England could be with safety conferred upon them.

It was said that the example of France threatened not only this, but all the countries of the world. Whatever this right honourable gentleman might feel upon this subject, there were several countries who thought differently, or which at least did

not seek their protection by similar measures. They found their safer course was in being neutral as to the war, and in preserving to their people the blessings of peace and industry. "But America even felt alarmed." If it was true that America felt alarmed, it would be wise for that House to observe what had been her conduct in that alarm. Had she involved herself in a *bellum internecinum* to exterminate French principles? Had she suspended her habeas corpus act? Had she passed an alien bill? A treasonable correspondence act? Had she shocked every feeling, every humane and every considerate mind, by the scandalous rigour of her legal punishments? Had she plunged herself into a war, and loaded her people with new and excessive burdens? No: she had maintained a strict and perfect neutrality as to the belligerent powers; and she had protected herself at home by exhibiting to her people all the beauties of their own system, by securing to them all their privileges in their full enjoyment, by enlarging rather than abridging their liberties, and by showing that, so far from dreading comparison, she placed her confidence in leaving to the free judgment of the people the most ample discussion of political doctrines.

With regard to the persons who composed these societies, he certainly knew little of them; it could not be supposed that he entertained any peculiar partiality towards them, at least if men were to judge from the opinion they had always delivered of him; they had never failed to speak of opposition, and of himself personally, with exactly the same expressions as they had used towards administration. The same distrust of their conduct, the same avowed hostility, appeared in their writings towards both. They had certainly paid him personally a compliment in mentioning him at the same time with the right honourable gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer, as far as regarded the splendid talents of that right honourable gentleman; but it was not equally flattering to him to be put on a comparison with that right honourable gentleman in regard to their right to the confidence of the public. It was not likely, therefore, that he was actuated by any partial regard to these societies; but he considered it as an unwise and illiberal course to take advantage of any odium that there might be against persons in order to stigmatise measures which might otherwise be good. Though there were among these societies men of low and desperate fortunes who might be very ready to embrace any enterprise, however hazardous, and though there might be others whom he believed, from their characters, to possess

wicked intentions, yet still that was no argument with him for casting a general obloquy on measures which were in themselves harmless. To deny to the people the right of discussion because upon some occasions that right had been exercised by indiscreet or bad men, was what he could not subscribe to. The right of popular discussion was a salutary and an essential privilege of the subject. He would not answer long for the conduct of parliament if it were not subject to the jealousy of the people. They all entertained becoming respect for the executive government, that was, for the chief magistrate of the kingdom, but their respect for the king did not supersede the vigilance of parliament. In his opinion, the best security for the due maintenance of the constitution was in the strict and incessant vigilance of the people over parliament itself. Meetings of the people, therefore, for the discussion of public objects were not merely legal, but laudable; and unless it was to be contended that there was some magic in the word convention which brought with it disorder, anarchy, and ruin, he could perceive no just ground for demolishing the constitution of England merely because it was intended to hold a meeting for the purpose of obtaining a parliamentary reform. With respect to their plan, that of universal suffrage, he never had but one opinion on the subject. He had constantly and uniformly considered universal suffrage as a wild and ridiculous idea. When his noble relation, the Duke of Richmond, had one day taken pains to explain his ideas on this subject, a learned and ingenious friend of his said to him, with as much truth as wit, "My lord, I think the best part of your grace's plan is its utter impracticability." He had always thought that it was impracticable; and though he could not agree with the opinion, that rather than continue the present state of representation he would incur all the hazards of universal suffrage, yet he was ready to say that the measures of last year, the horrid and detestable prosecutions, the scandalous sentences that had been passed, and the scandalous way in which they had been executed, did not tend to make him wish less than heretofore for some reform that should protect the country against these violations of good sense, propriety and justice. If the habeas corpus act was to be suspended upon such an argument as had been advanced that night, and we were to go on step by step, as we were threatened, with the introduction of the Scots criminal code, with the extinction, perhaps, of the trial by jury, and he should then be asked what was his opinion, he did not know but he should be ready to prefer any change to such a



horrid situation as the country would then be reduced to. He made no scruple to own that the events which had lately passed in France had made a most powerful impression on his mind. He should not do justice to himself if he did not frankly confess that they had served to correct several opinions which he previously held; they had served also to confirm many former opinions. They had convinced his mind of the truth of an observation of Cicero, one of the most common, which was early taught in their grammars, but from which, when a boy, his heart revolted. It was this:

*Iniquissimam pacem justissimo bello antefero.*

He had, in the ardour natural to youth, thought this a most horrid and degrading sentiment. What! give up a just and glorious cause merely on account of the dangers and, perhaps, the miseries of war! When he came to maturer years he thought the sentiment at least doubtful, but he was now ready to confess that the events of the French revolution had made the wisdom of the sentiment clear and manifest to his mind. He was ready to say that he could hardly frame to himself the condition of a people in which he would not rather covet to continue than to advise them to fly to arms, and strive to seek redress through the unknown miseries of a revolution. Our own glorious revolution in 1688 had happily been clear of all these horrors; that of 1641 had shown a great deal of this kind of calamity; but the French revolution had exhibited the scene in its most shocking aspect. The more, however, his heart was weaned from such experiments, the more he detested and abhorred all acts on the part of any government which tended to exasperate the people, to engender discontent, to alienate their hearts, and to spirit them up to resistance and to the desire of change. The more he deprecated resistance, the more he felt bound to oppose all foolish and presumptuous acts on the part of government, by which they expressed a disdain for the feelings of the people, or by which they strove to keep down all complaint by inhuman severities. He was convinced that wise men, deliberately weighing the relative duties of government and people, and judging of human nature as it was, would see the wisdom of mutual concessions, would recommend incessant conciliation, and would deplore all measures which could exasperate and inflame the minds of the people and induce them to wish for the horrors of a change. Nothing was so clear from all the history of England as that we had never been so fortunate as when the government had

conciliated the people; never so miserable as when a wretched system of persecution had been unhappily and unwisely adopted by ministers. Persecution had never been successful in extirpating opposition to any system either religious or civil. It was not merely the divinity of Christianity that had made it triumph; for other religions, certainly not divine, but which were founded in imposture, as well as a number of the wildest sects, had thriven and flourished under persecution, on account, as he believed, of that very persecution. The human mind was roused by oppression; and so far from yielding to persecution, exerted all its energies in consequence of the attacks it had to encounter. Was it believed that, if there was a party in this country who cherished in their hearts the desire of reform, the sentiment could be extirpated by exercising over the individuals legal severities? Impotent were the men who thought that opinions could be so encountered! There were some things that were most successfully vanquished by neglect. America held out to us the true course and the wise plan to be pursued. Let us, like her, demonstrate to every man the blessings of our system. Let us show that we not only are convinced that it is good, but that it will bear to be examined and compared with any other system. Let us make the people proud to court comparison, and strive rather to add new blessings to those they enjoy than to abridge those which they already possess. Let us think for a moment what must be the joy which the present measure, if adopted, will produce in France. How will it be received in the convention? Barrere will, no doubt, triumphantly hold it forth as a proof that all the stories which he has tried to propagate in France, of there being a party in this country favourable to them, are true. At least he would say it had broken out to such a height that ministers could no longer think the government safe, and the constitution was to be suspended in order to protect the state against the French party. If any accounts of the true state of this kingdom had reached France, which told them that we were united almost as one man against all doctrines which led to anarchy, Barrere would hold up the present measure in contradiction to that faithful report and say that it was obvious there must be a formidable party in England in favour of French doctrines, when one of the most beautiful branches of our boasted constitution was to be lopped from the tree. Nay, though he for one had always treated with scorn the idea of an invasion, he asked those who held out that fear to the country if anything could be more likely to induce the French to undertake

such an enterprise than by thus giving to them the impression that we were threatened with an insurrection at home? Some words had passed as if he had the night before said that he would withdraw his attendance from the House. He thought it incumbent upon him to say that he should act in this respect as upon reflection he felt it to be his duty to his constituents. But he certainly had not said that he should withdraw from the House. Mr. Fox concluded with a strong admonition to the House on the present alarming measure. He said he saw it was to pass; that further effort was vain; that the precipitation with which it had been hurried on made it idle for him to hope that argument would induce them to hesitate; and all that remained for him was to pronounce his solemn protest against a measure pregnant with consequences so fatal to the established order and strength and freedom of the country.

Mr. Pitt followed Mr. Fox, after which the House divided on the motion, That the House do now adjourn:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS {	Major Maitland }	33.—	NOES {	Sir J. Saunderson }
	Mr. Jekyll }			Mr. Adams }
				183.

The bill was then read a third time and passed, and at three o'clock on Sunday morning the House adjourned.

## MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR PUTTING AN END TO THE WAR WITH FRANCE

*May 30, 1794.*

IN pursuance of the notice he had given on the 26th instant,

Mr. Fox rose and said that, thinking as he did of the present lamentable and disastrous war, he should not do his duty if he did not once more, before the close of the session, give the House an opportunity of considering the situation in which the country stood with respect to that war, and of reviewing the events which had led to that situation. On the war itself little now remained to be said: his present object was to call the attention of the House to particular facts that admitted of no dispute, and the inferences which every unprejudiced and dispassionate man must draw from those facts. First, then, as to the origin of the war: he had always considered as one of the greatest advantages of a free constitution the publicity of all the acts of government; and thence he had hoped that it was impossible for us to be plunged into a war upon false pretences, for one thing to be held up to the people as the cause, and another to be pursued by ministers as the end. Here, however, his hopes had deceived him. At the commencement of the last session of parliament the language of ministers and the language of the House breathed nothing but the strictest neutrality. It was not merely in the beginning of the French revolution that this language was held, but after the king had been dethroned and many of those atrocities had been committed at the view of which every feeling mind shrunk with horror. Ministers professed then to think that we were not to look to the conduct of another country in its internal affairs as the criterion of peace or war; and although many acts had been done in France of which it was difficult to say whether they were more calculated to move pity or excite indignation, still they pretended to court peace and neutrality. They said fairly that if the French should make an unprovoked attack on any of our allies, or pursue plans of aggrandisement which, if accomplished, would render it difficult to oppose any attack they might afterwards make, we must take part in the war. Great pains were taken to persuade the House that their

attempt to open the navigation of the Scheldt was an aggression upon our allies the Dutch; and however ludicrously or contemptuously that had been since treated as the cause of the war, he appealed to the recollection of the House whether it was not at first the point principally insisted upon. To settle the dispute upon this point, he had recommended negotiation to the House, and the House refused to adopt it. But although the House decided against it, the ministers thought it convenient to follow his recommendation. They had recourse, not to an open and manly, but to an underhand and equivocal mode of negotiation which, even if meant honestly, could hardly fail of defeating its own purpose. In every dispute the first step towards an accommodation was to show the other party that we did not mean to treat them with contempt. But ministers, in their negotiation, by their inimical conduct, by refusing to acknowledge that those with whom they were treating had any power to treat, took the sure course of rendering it ineffectual. Their object was to pretend a negotiation, and to pursue such means as must make it fail. It failed accordingly. Even after that nothing was said of interfering in the internal government of France. On the contrary, it was asserted by those who were in the confidence of his majesty's ministers, and by ministers themselves, that the form of the French government at that time, or whatever future form it might assume, was not a fundamental objection to peace. During the recess several declarations were published in his majesty's name, very inconsistent with our former professions of having gone to war only to repel an unjust aggression on our allies, and an unprovoked injury offered to ourselves. When Dumourier declared against the convention, and proposed marching to Paris to restore the monarchy, the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg, in the name of the emperor, issued a proclamation by which he acceded to the constitution of 1789, and declared that whatever strong places should be given up to him he would hold in trust for Louis XVII. till that constitution should be restored. True it was that proclamation was almost instantly retracted, to the disgrace of all those who were parties to it. Whatever might be the fate of his present motion, whatever might be the issue of the war, the time he hoped would come when we should clear ourselves in the face of Europe from the infamy of having been accessories in the transaction. The emperor, as dead to all shame, as unfeeling with respect to every principle of justice, retracted his proclamation before it could be known what effect it might have produced on the people of France, and

within five days after it had been issued. What could be found to match this, even in the conduct of those who governed France? It appeared to be done as if the emperor had feared that the King of Prussia's perfidy to Poland might stand unparalleled, and he himself could not be considered as a fit member of the confederacy till he had done something to keep his ally in countenance. In a cause which we were so often told was the cause of morality, virtue and religion, he trusted that his majesty, for his own and the national honour, would disclaim all participation in or approbation of such acts. The surrender of Toulon was considered as a fit occasion for declaring the intentions of ministers. Lord Hood took possession of it on the express condition of maintaining the constitution of 1789, and pledged himself to protect all Frenchmen who should repair to that standard. A declaration in the name of his majesty afterwards came out, different, indeed, from this; verbose, obscure and equivocal, like the production of men who were afraid of saying anything distinctly, who wished not their meaning to be clearly understood; that, stripped of all the elegant rubbish with which it was loaded, declared only this—that the restoration of monarchy, without specifying of what kind, was the only condition upon which we could treat with France. Thus did our avowed objects progressively change. It would be said that we might fairly enter into a war with one view, and afterwards, as the alteration of circumstances made it necessary or convenient, change that view for another. Be it so, for the sake of argument; but it became not us to say that we were fighting in defence of morality, religion and the rights of civilised society, who had entered into the war about the navigation of the Scheldt. We had confessed that this was the object for which we began the war, and we were not now to boast of higher motives. But for this aggression on our ally, the cause of morality and religion would have been left to other defenders. If the change of object was a question of policy, let it be so considered. What had appeared to make it more politic now than at the commencement of the war? Had our experience at Toulon, the success of the Earl of Moira's expedition, or the internal state of France convinced us that we had a better prospect of terminating the war by the aid of Frenchmen than before? We had disclaimed peace with the present rulers, and we had disclaimed interfering in the internal government of France. But how had we disclaimed interfering? We were actually interfering, and our interference was of the most objectionable kind. We said that

our object was not to build up a government for France, but to destroy the system which now domineered in it. Suppose this point gained, were we to leave the French, thus deprived of everything like a government, to settle one for themselves? Were we to say to them, "You, of whose wisdom, moderation and humanity we have had such proofs, and entertain so high an opinion, assemble again by your delegates, as you did in 1789, and build up a government to your own liking, a monarchy, a republic, no matter what, so it be not Jacobinism"? Thus we should propose to let loose the French again to that state from which we wanted to recall them, and to renew all those horrors which we had so often deplored. This mode of interference was only politic inasmuch as it was faithless. It might be hoped to unite in our favour all those who hated the present system; but of these how many must be deceived! One man might join us because he wished for the restoration of the old despotism, another because he wished for a limited monarchy, a third for a republic on better principles—and each confiding that our views were the same with his own. Two of these at least must be disappointed, perhaps all the three. Was this, he asked, mere theory? Had not a noble lord (Mulgrave) told the House that such was the state of the people at Toulon, almost equally divided between abhorrence of the old government and abhorrence of the new? and when there was neither foreign force nor the cruel rigour of the present system to control their passions, would they not break out into acts of open contest and violence? But what he thought most to be complained of was that we had been drawn into the war upon professions of neutrality, if neutrality could be preserved, and were now called upon to persist in it on declarations directly opposite; that the people had been deluded by false pretences to spend their money and their blood for purposes to which, if fairly stated to them in the first instance, they would not have consented; and being once engaged in the war, were told that they could not get out of it. He had often been puzzled to divine what were the motives upon which ministers themselves were acting. During part of the last campaign he thought they meant to adhere to their professed intentions. While a civil war was raging in La Vendée, we took Valenciennes and Mentz. The garrisons of those places we bound not to serve against any of the allies for a stipulated time, but we did not prohibit them from bearing arms against the royalists in La Vendée. In fact, we did as much as if we had sent them against the royalists, for we dismissed them without

the possibility of being employed but only there. This was, perhaps, meant to show that they disclaimed interfering in the internal government of France; and to refute as calumnies the allegations that to interfere was their express, although not their avowed object. In the subsequent part of the campaign the effect of this conduct was completely effaced in one point of view, but not in another, for the reproach of it still remained. It was effaced by the declarations at Toulon, by the king's manifestoes, and by preparing an army for the avowed purpose of co-operating with those very royalists.

He had thus shown the inconsistencies of ministers and their supporters with respect to the professed object of the war, but these were not all. They had formerly contended that if we suffered France to aggrandise herself at the expense of the emperor and the King of Sardinia, we might have to contend against her increased power when our present allies, offended at our neutrality, would not assist us. He had never been able to see the force of this argument. He had always imagined that what we should be principally called upon to furnish in any war with France would be money; and that our continental allies would not refuse to accept of subsidies from us at any time. What was now the fact? Did we fear that the emperor would make peace with France too soon if we did not interpose? Fortunate for Europe would it have been if he had done so; and the barrier of the Netherlands, which the mistaken policy of a former reign had demolished, might have been restored. Would the King of Prussia have withdrawn himself sooner, or might he not have been prevailed upon by a subsidy to lend his troops as he had done now—as the emperor might soon do also? Besides our engagements with the King of Prussia and the emperor, we had entered into various conventions with other powers. One of these, the treaty with the King of Sardinia, had been the subject of discussion before, and it was unnecessary to enlarge upon it again. But in this had we any equivalent for what we engaged to perform? On all the occasions referred to as precedents in the former debate, we had to fear that the King of Sardinia might join our enemy, and to bring him over to our side was a material advantage—Was there any danger of his joining France in the present war if we had left him to his own councils? His neutrality would have been much more advantageous to the allies than his assistance. But it was said he might make a powerful diversion in our favour, and by drawing off a considerable part of the French force to the south, facilitate our



operations in Flanders. At present the diversion he made was by an incursion of the French into his own territory. Would he, with his British subsidy, be able to defend his own dominions and protect Italy? Clearly not, and the safety of Italy must now depend on a great Austrian force. From such information as was accessible to every man, he heard of nothing but the success of the French on the side of Italy and, what was still worse, the disposition of the people in their favour, who hated nothing more than they did both the Austrian and Sardinian government. The French had entered Piedmont at two points, were threatening Turin, and could only be repelled by an Austrian army. In whose favour, then, was the diversion by subsidising the King of Sardinia?—of the French who employed a force in that quarter which they could not, perhaps, have transported to the north; and against the emperor, whose exertions in Flanders must be weakened by the exertions he was thus obliged to make in Italy.

All the conventions entered into by us contained a clause by which the contracting parties bound themselves not to lay down their arms while any part of the territory of either of them remained in possession of the enemy, and this was to extend to all powers who should accede to the confederacy. Ministers were formerly asked whether the emperor and the King of Prussia had acceded to this guarantee? It was unnecessary to ask them that question now; the King of Prussia had laid down his arms till he was bought by our money to take them up again; and the emperor had refused to agree to the clause. Thus we alone were bound to continue a war, now declared to be a war *ad internecinem*; and consequently of incalculable duration. We entered into a treaty with the King of Prussia by which neither party was to have laid down arms but by consent of the other. From this engagement he escaped by a loophole; for as none of his dominions were within reach of the enemy, he had only to withdraw his troops from the scene of action and tell us that he had made peace with France. But he was bound to continue war in other parts till the objects of it were obtained. But did he not get rid of this by another loophole under the words, “as long as circumstances will permit”? Such was his engagement in July 1793. What change of circumstances had happened in February 1794? Had he sustained losses? Had he suffered defeats? No. The campaign, ministers assured us, had been most successful: but he had discovered that war had a tendency to exhaust his finances! he had found out a circumstance which

it was impossible to foresee, that his victories would cost him something! This was the unlooked-for circumstance that would not permit the King of Prussia to continue the war. Had the public been told in July 1793 that the treaty was binding upon him only for the rest of the campaign, they would have seen it in a very different point of view. The war was called the common cause of the civilised world, and all Europe, we had been assured, would join us in it. A great confederacy, indeed, had been formed; but many of the powers of Europe had not joined us, and it was reasonable to conclude that they had not the same apprehensions of danger. If the general interest were to be admitted, the emperor had still a more particular interest than we had. He contributed large armies, but no part of the subsidy to Prussia. It was even said that ministers asked him to pay his share, but that he refused: hence it was clear that all the money must be supplied by us and the Dutch. The emperor possessed various and rich dominions remote from the seat of war. From these he could not draw supplies in money. Even the part of his territories the most exposed to the enemy, more abounding in wealth than almost any country this excepted, refused to assist him; so that he was obliged to come here for a great and heavy loan. The propriety of allowing a foreign power to draw money out of this country by loan he would not now discuss. His opinion was that it was best to leave individuals to their own judgment. But the loan showed that the emperor had no resource but here. If the loan should fail, where was he to go? Or if he wanted another next year, and could not obtain it, must he come, like the King of Prussia, for a subsidy? How could we refuse him if it was true that the existence of Jacobinism in France was incompatible with our safety as a nation? Must not we give subsidy after subsidy while the war was going on with various success, and the end of it, on the only terms on which we said it could be ended, was too remote for speculation?

The consequence which he drew from all this was that we ought to think of some rational mode of obtaining peace. That could only be effected in one of three ways—by treating, by compelling the enemy to submit to our own terms, or by treating with sufficient force in our hands to induce compliance with reasonable demands. The House had never sanctioned the dangerous speculation that to secure England we must destroy Jacobinism in France. The experience of ages had proved it to be the will of Providence that monarchies, oligarchies, aristocracies, republics might exist in all their several varieties in

different parts of the world without imposing the necessity of endless wars on the rest. The argument for peace had this advantage, that if peace should fail, we might then resort to war; but from war to peace, if that experiment should fail, the transition was not so easy. The French government had existed for two years. A powerful confederacy had been formed, numerous armies and great generals employed against it, and yet internally it appeared to be stronger than ever. In the first campaign the Duke of Brunswick, at the head of a veteran army, had been compelled to retreat, and the Austrian Netherlands were overrun. In the second campaign armies still more formidable had been brought into the field, and it had been, as ministers boasted, not merely successful, but brilliant. Yet the French government internally remained untouched by our disasters or our successes. If this was the dreadful situation in which we were placed,—if we were at war with a nation that rose in numbers and enthusiasm as much on our victories as our defeats, we must adopt the principle,

*Nil actum reputans, si quid superesset agendum.*

We had done nothing while anything remained to do. We might take islands in the West Indies; we might even circumscribe the European territories of France; but while the nation remained we were no nearer peace. This was a situation melancholy and deplorable at any time, but much more so when we adverted to the inability of our allies to go on but as we could afford to pay them. But if we chose to revert to the old maxim of state policy, that the internal anarchy of France, or of any other country, was no concern of ours, then, indeed, our successes in the East and West Indies would tell in our favour. Far was he from undervaluing those successes, or the merit of the gallant officers by whose valour and skill they had been achieved; but he wished them to prove not merely a source of glory to the officers, but of solid advantage to the country. The settlements and islands we had taken in the East and West Indies were excellent materials for negotiation, but nothing for overturning the present government of France. If we aimed only at a safe and equitable peace for ourselves and our allies, they might be restored for restitution of what had been conquered from any of those allies, or kept as indemnity for the past and security for the future, as the relative circumstances of the war and our engagements might point out.

He therefore wished the House and the country to consider

whether we had not now the means of making peace; for, on the terms on which ministers said it could alone be made, he despaired of ever obtaining it. They said formerly that France was not in a negotiable state; that there was no man in it who could answer for the conduct of another. Was this the present state of France? He was little inclined to pay any compliment to tyranny, but it was surely in the power of tyranny, while it lasted, to coerce its own subjects. If the present rulers of France thought proper to declare war against any neutral nation, even against America, did any man doubt that they would be obeyed? Why, then, doubt their being obeyed if they made peace with any nation with whom they were at war? If by force, as some pretended, they sent their people to the field of battle, very little force would be sufficient to restrain them from it. They had been guilty of no infringement of the rights of neutral states; they had respected the Swiss territory under very difficult circumstances, and had passed through part of the Genoese territory in arms without giving occasion for a single complaint. He wished that we might be able to maintain a good understanding with neutral states in every instance as well. He was ready to allow that it was one thing to propose peace and another to obtain it. With a nation in a state so anomalous as that of France, all events must be doubtful; but if we were to propose peace and fail, what should we lose? Would the King of Prussia take no more of our money? Would the emperor refuse a subsidy when he had occasion for it? This we should gain, that the convention would be no longer able to delude the people of France into the persuasion that we were making war upon them, not for the usual objects of war, but for the destruction of their liberties; and we should convince the people of this country that the war was not carried on upon principles hostile to freedom, from which Great Britain had more to fear than any other nation.

Some sanguine men were of opinion that certain principles established in one country must necessarily disturb the peace of another. He had doubted the doctrine when he first heard it; and the more he had examined the more he disliked it. If it was maintained that opinions held in France must contaminate the minds of Englishmen, this would lead to a revival of every species of intolerance, and to a more rigorous scrutiny of opinions than could be safe for states or individuals, more especially for this country. Had it not often been said that the French revolution owed its origin to the American war; that opinions

borrowed from America gave it birth? This was so plausible that he knew not how to doubt it. Not that the French took the American opinions as they really were; they adopted them crudely in theory and perverted them in practice. Whence did the Americans receive their opinions? Not from the wandering Indians, not from Mexico and Peru—they carried them with them from England. He must, therefore, deprecate questioning opinions on the possible consequences to which they might lead, for then would both America and England be found guilty. Whence were derived the Rights of Man, so much abused by misapplication, so fundamentally true? Not from the ancients, not from Asia or Africa, but from Great Britain; from that philosophy, if it was still safe to use the word, which Locke and Sydney taught and illustrated. If we were once to argue that the principles of any one people were dangerous to others, then we must be odious to all other nations whose forms of government and modes of thinking had less of liberty than our own. To despotic governments we must be detestable. "Although France," they might say, "has been the theatre on which the abominations that flow from those principles have been exhibited, yet England is the author"; and the example of England they would feel to be more dangerous, as truth was a more powerful instrument than error. When the courts of Berlin and Vienna exhibited such instances of perfidy and injustice, might they not well think that British justice and good faith afforded an example to their people and a reproach to themselves not to be tolerated?

He would now assume that the House was to differ from him in all he had said, and to persist in the plan of overturning Jacobinism in France as the only road to peace. In that case they were bound to say so in explicit terms, and to declare, moreover, that in conjunction with a certain description of Frenchmen, they meant to obtain some definite form of government for France. Then every Frenchman would know what he had to expect of us. If we declared for what some chose to call the old monarchy, but which he should ever call the old despotism, many would repair to the standard. If we declared for the constitution of 1789, those who approved of that constitution would join us. And if we declared for any form of a republic, a word which a remembrance of the grievances and oppressions under the monarchy had rendered popular, we should have the adherents of that system. Then men would join us whom we meant not to deceive. By professing only to demolish Jacobinism

without specifying what we meant to erect in its stead, we might have more hands but fewer hearts; for all who joined us would constantly suspect that they were assisted but to be betrayed. If, therefore, the House should not adopt the better resolution, he should move another resolution to this effect.

He had carefully avoided touching on the military conduct or the present state of the campaign. He had early in the session examined the attention paid to protecting our trade, he feared with but little of the effect which he hoped to produce, as the premiums for insurance, then triumphantly held up as an argument against him, too fully proved by their rapid increase. He looked to Flanders with pain and anxiety; we had destroyed many of the enemy since the opening of the campaign, but alas! the slaughter had not been all on one side. He had felt some curiosity to calculate the loss of the allies of all descriptions in the last campaign in all the points of action, from such documents as were public, and also to estimate the loss of the French, which could scarcely be less than 200,000! What, then, were we to think of conquering a people who could bear such a loss as this and still present superior numbers in every point of attack? We had reduced Landrecies, and while we were doing that the enemy had pushed into West Flanders, from which, with all the well-earned laurels our troops had obtained, we had not yet been able to dislodge them. Without professing to be a critic in matters of war, when he looked at the frontier, he could not help thinking the conquest of France a more desperate crusade than ever. What said our allies of the French? The emperor had published that the attack of the 17th was admirably planned; that in the execution generals, officers and men all merited equal praise; and yet it had totally failed! Hence he must conclude that we had to cope with a very formidable enemy. Was it owing to the elements that the plan had miscarried? No, it was because West Flanders was intersected by hedges and ditches. But was this a thing unknown before to the emperor's officers in his own territories? Did they plan an attack only to discover that they were fighting in an enclosed country? It was like the King of Prussia's discovery that war cost money. Since then we had obtained a victory on which no man could be supposed to dwell with more peculiar pleasure than he himself, but the only effect of that victory was not to dislodge the French from their position in Flanders, but to avert a great danger from the allied army. When such was the state of the campaign in Flanders, when the Spaniards and Piedmontese were repulsed,

and instead of making a diversion required assistance, surely he might infer that there was as little prospect of destroying the Jacobin government of France now as when the war began and we professed no such object. Why not, then, recur to old maxims, when our victories and the islands we had taken might give them such effect? It was impossible to dissemble that we had a serious dispute with America; and although we might be confident that the wisest and best man of his age who presided in the government of that country would do everything that became him to avert a war, it was impossible to foresee the issue. America had no fleet, no army; but in case of war she would find various means to harass and annoy us. Against her we could not strike a blow that would not be as severely felt in London as in America, so identified were the two countries by commercial intercourse. To a contest with such an adversary he looked as the greatest possible misfortune. If we commenced another crusade against her we might destroy her trade and check the progress of her agriculture, but we must also equally injure ourselves. Desperate therefore, indeed, must be that war in which each wound inflicted on our enemy would at the same time inflict one upon ourselves. He hoped to God that such an event as a war with America would not happen: but whether it did or did not, he contended that every day afforded additional reasons for putting an end to our crusade against France.

Mr. Fox concluded with reading the following resolutions:

1. "That it appears to this House that during the several changes which took place in the constitution and government of France before the commencement of hostilities, and more particularly after the events of the 10th of August, 1792, when his majesty was advised by his ministers to suspend all official communications with France, it was, and continued to be, the professed principle and policy of his majesty's government carefully to observe a strict neutrality, and uniformly to abstain from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France: that when his majesty was advised to make a further augmentation of his forces by sea and land at the beginning of the last year, it was for the declared purpose of opposing views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France, and that when his majesty acquainted parliament that acts of hostility had been directed by the government of France against his majesty's subjects, and after war had been declared against his majesty and the United Provinces, the then avowed object of prosecuting the war, on our part, was to oppose the further views of aggrandisement imputed to France, and that the prosecution of the war on this ground, and for the attainment of this object, was approved of by both Houses of parliament.

2. "That it appears to this House that, at or before the end of

April 1793, the armies of France were obliged to evacuate Holland and Flanders, and to retire within their own territory; and that the Prince of Cobourg, commander-in-chief of the Emperor's forces in Flanders, did, on the 5th of April, engage and declare that he would join and co-operate with General Dumourier, to give to France her constitutional king, and the constitution which she had formed for herself; and that the Prince of Cobourg did also then declare, on his word of honour, that if any strong places should be delivered over to his troops, he should consider them no otherwise than as sacred deposits; and that, on the 9th of the same month, all the preceding declarations of the Prince of Cobourg were revoked.

3. "That it appears to this House that, by the 15th article of the treaty concluded with the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel on the 10th of April, 1793, his majesty's ministers were of opinion that the situation of affairs had then entirely changed its aspect, in consequence of which his majesty might not have occasion for the Hessian troops, and might be at liberty to relinquish their service, on certain conditions of compensation to be made to the Landgrave.

4. "That it appears to this House that, on the 14th of July, 1793, a convention was concluded between his majesty and the King of Prussia, in which their majesties reciprocally promised to continue to employ their respective forces, as far as their circumstances would permit, in carrying on a war equally just and necessary.

5. "That it appears to this House that, on the 23rd of August, 1793, Lord Hood declared to the people of Toulon that he had no other view but that of restoring peace to a great nation, upon the most just, liberal and honourable terms; that the inhabitants of Toulon did in return declare that it was their unanimous wish to adopt a monarchical government, such as it was originally formed by the constituent assembly of 1789; and that Lord Hood, by his proclamation of the 28th of August, accepted of that declaration, and did then repeat what he had already declared to the people of the south of France, that he took possession of Toulon, and held it in trust only for Louis XVII.

6. "That it appears to this House that the constitution to which the declaration and acceptance stated in the preceding resolution are applied was the same which his majesty's ambassador at the Hague did, in a memorial presented to the States General on the 25th of January, 1793, describe in the following terms, viz.: 'It is not quite four years since certain miscreants, assuming the name of philosophers, have presumed to think themselves capable of establishing a new system of civil society; in order to realise this dream, the offspring of vanity, it became necessary for them to overturn and destroy all established notions of subordination, of morals and of religion'; and that this description was applied by the said ambassador to a government with which his majesty continued to treat and negotiate from its institution in 1789 to its dissolution in August 1792, and that his majesty's ambassador was not recalled from Paris until that government was dissolved.

7. "That it appears to this House by the declaration made by his majesty's ministers, and dated on the 29th of October, 1793, 'That his majesty demands only of France that some legitimate and



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stable government should be established, founded on the acknowledged principles of universal justice, and capable of maintaining with other powers the accustomed relations of union and peace'; and that his majesty, in treating for the re-establishment of general tranquillity with such a government, 'would propose none other than equitable and moderate conditions, nor such as the expenses, the risks, and the sacrifices of the war might justify'; and that his majesty hoped to find in the other powers engaged with him in the common cause sentiments and views perfectly conformable to his own.

8. "That it appears to this House that, at the commencement of the war, the prosecution of it was considered by his majesty as a cause of general concern, in which his majesty had every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who were united with his majesty by the ties of alliance, and who felt an interest in the same cause.

9. "That it does not appear to this House that, in the prosecution of a war considered by his majesty as a cause of general concern, and as a common cause, his majesty has received that cordial co-operation which we were led to expect from those powers who were united with him by the ties of alliance, and who were supposed to feel an interest in the same cause.

10. "That, on a review of the conduct of the several powers of Europe, from whom, if the cause was common, and if the concern was general, such cordial co-operation might have been expected, it appears to this House that many of those powers have not co-operated with his majesty; that the Empress of Russia has not contributed in any shape to the support of this common cause; that the crowns of Sweden and Denmark have united to support their neutrality, and to defend themselves against any attempt to force them to take part in this common cause; that Poland is neither able nor inclined to take part in it; that Switzerland and Venice are neutral; that the King of Sardinia has required and obtained a subsidy from Great Britain to enable him to act even on the defensive; that the King of the Two Sicilies, professing to make common cause with his majesty in the war against France, is bound to it by nothing but his own judgment in the course of events which may occur, and that he is at liberty to abandon the common cause whenever he shall judge that he cannot any longer with justice and dignity continue the war; that the efforts of Spain and Portugal have been completely ineffectual.

11. "That, with respect to the powers who were principals in the present war (viz.: the States General, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor), it appears to this House that the States General, having refused to contract for the payment of their portion of the subsidies to be paid to the King of Prussia beyond the term of the present year, have thereby reserved to themselves a right to withdraw from the support of the war at that period, and to throw the whole burden of it upon Great Britain; that the King of Prussia, being bound by the convention of July 1793 to act in the most perfect concert and the most intimate confidence with his majesty, upon all the objects relative to the present war, and having then promised to continue to

employ his forces as far as circumstances would permit in carrying on the war, and his majesty having since then been obliged by the treaty of the 19th April, 1794, to grant to the King of Prussia an enormous subsidy in order to engage him to continue to co-operate in the prosecution of the war, it follows that the King of Prussia is no longer a principal party, nor even an auxiliary in the said war, but that he basely lends out his troops to this country in return for a most profitable pecuniary compensation at our expense, and that Great Britain is, in fact, loaded with his proper share of the burden of a war which is said to be the common cause of every civilised state; finally, that if it were expedient or necessary to purchase the King of Prussia's co-operation on such terms, the emperor, whose interests are more directly at stake, was full as much bound in reason and justice as his majesty or the States General could be to contribute equally to that expense; and that if, at any future period of the war, the emperor's finances should be so exhausted as to make it impossible for him to maintain it on his part at his own charge, his imperial majesty will be invited and encouraged, if not justified, by the example and success of the King of Prussia, to call upon this country to defray the whole expense of whatever army he may continue to employ against the French; nor does it appear to this House by what distinction in policy or in argument the terms granted to the King of Prussia can be refused to the emperor, whose efforts and expenses in the course of the war have infinitely exceeded those of Prussia, or how this country can in prudence or with safety decline a compliance with such demands, if it be true, as has been declared, that the destruction of the present French government is essential to the security of everything which is most dear and valuable to us as a nation.

12. "That it appears to this House that, in consequence of the events of the war on the Continent and elsewhere, all views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France, supposing the French to entertain such views, are evidently unattainable, and must be relinquished by France; and that therefore the object of the war as it was originally professed on our part, viz., the restoration of peace on terms of permanent security, is now attainable, and may be secured, provided that on one side the French shall be content with the possession and safety of their own country, and that we, on the other, shall adhere to the principles of justice and policy, so often declared by his majesty and avowed by his ministers, of uniformly abstaining from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France.

13. "That it is the duty of his majesty's ministers to avail themselves of the present circumstances of the war, and to promote a pacification by every means in their power, by proposing to France equitable and moderate conditions, and above all things, by abstaining from any interference in the internal affairs of France.

14. "That it is the opinion of this House that in every possible case it is equally desirable that his majesty should make an explicit declaration of his views. If it is the intention not to interfere in the internal government of France, nothing can contribute so much to advance a negotiation with those who now exercise the power of

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government in that country as such a declaration solemnly and explicitly made. If on the other hand it is intended to interfere, it is highly essential to make the degree of interference precisely known, to induce such parts of the French nation as are dissatisfied with the present government to unite and exert themselves with satisfaction and security."

Upon the first resolution being put, Mr. Jenkinson rose and moved the previous question thereon; in which he was supported by Mr. Pitt.

The House then divided:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS	{ M. Grey Mr. Lambton }	55.—NOES	{ Mr. Jenkinson Mr. John Smyth }
			208.

So it passed in the negative.

## ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION

*December 30, 1794.*

THE king's speech reiterated the necessity of persisting in the vigorous prosecution of the war, and declared that though Holland had been led to enter into negotiations for peace with France no one could derive real security from such negotiations, and on the part of this country they could not be attempted without sacrificing both honour and safety to the enemy.

An address of thanks having been moved by Sir Edward Knatchbull and seconded by Mr. Canning, it was objected to by Mr. Wilberforce as pledging the House to carry on the war till a counter-revolution was effected in France: he therefore moved the following amendment: "To assure his majesty that we are determined to grant the most liberal supplies for the purpose of enabling his majesty to act with vigour and effect in supporting the dignity of his crown, the internal security of his dominions and the good faith towards his majesty's allies for which this country has been so eminently distinguished: and that, notwithstanding the disappointments and reverses of the last campaign, we are firmly convinced that from the unremitting exertions of his majesty, and the spirit and zeal which have been so generally manifested throughout the kingdom by a people sensible of the advantages they enjoy under his majesty's government, we may promise ourselves (by the blessing of Divine Providence) complete security from the attempts of foreign or domestic enemies: that at the same time we beg leave most humbly to represent to his majesty that, upon full consideration of all the events and circumstances of the present war, and of some transactions which have lately passed in France, and also of the negotiation entered into by the States General, we think it advisable and expedient to endeavour to restore the blessings of peace to his majesty's subjects, and to his allies, upon just and reasonable terms: but that if, contrary to the ardent wishes of his faithful Commons, such endeavours on the part of his majesty should be rendered ineffectual by the violence or ambition of the enemy, we are persuaded that the burdens and evils of a just and necessary war will be borne with cheerfulness by a loyal, affectionate and united people."—The amendment of Mr. Wilberforce was seconded by Mr. Duncombe and Mr. Burdon, but opposed by Mr. Windham. The ill success of the war he solely imputed to the misconduct of some of the allies. Comparing the events of the present with those of former wars, he asserted that all that could be said on this subject was that hitherto it had only been negatively successful. The most alarming circumstance attending it was, he said, that we were not true to ourselves. The political societies in England had

propagated principles inimical to it. The acquittal of those members belonging to them, by a jury at the late trials, he represented in the most odious light, styling them "acquitted felons." Being called to order, he explained himself by saying that though proofs had not been adduced of their legal guilt, it did not follow that they were free from moral guilt.—The desire of terminating a ruinous war was strongly approved by Mr. Bankes as equally just and indispensable, after the fruitless trial to reduce the enemy to our own terms. If no peace were admissible while France was a republic, the war might be endless.—These explicit avowals of a disapprobation of further hostilities on the part of members who had hitherto coincided with the ministerial system of war seemed to strike Mr. Pitt with great surprise. He denied the tendency of the king's speech to inculcate the continuance of the war till France reassumed a monarchical form; though he acknowledged his persuasion that no peace could be depended on till a kingly government was re-established; the only safe one, in his opinion, for all the European nations.

Mr. Fox said that, exhausted as he felt himself, and disgusted as the House must be at hearing a repetition of the same arguments upon which we had been first involved in a situation disastrous beyond example, if he did not endeavour to state to the House the necessity of adopting the amendment, or an amendment of some such nature, he should be wanting in his duty. On the conduct of the war not a word had been said. The honourable baronet who moved the address had declined all discussion on that head, expressing his belief that those who were entrusted with the direction of it would give the necessary explanations at a future period. The time certainly would come for those explanations or, at least, for calling for them. At present he wished gentlemen to consider the horrible picture which two of his majesty's ministers had given of our situation: that we were engaged and must persevere in a contest, the issue of which involved, not territory or commerce, not victory or defeat in the common acceptation of the words, but our constitution, our country, our existence as a nation. Viewing this picture, he was glad that truth and reason had at length found their way to the minds of some men. He should have thought it strange indeed if, while so many had separated themselves from him on differences of political opinion, there had been none to adopt the opinions which he still retained. Those who moved and supported the amendment now said that the House of Commons ought not, by their address to the crown, to pledge themselves never to agree to a peace with France while the present republican government existed. Was this a new doctrine? Certainly not: but it was new to call upon the House for such

a pledge. It was the first time of asking parliament to assure his majesty that they would never think it advisable to treat with the French republic on the present system, unless in a case of such imperious necessity on the part of this country as must preclude all reasoning; and he gave ministers credit for their candour in asking it thus fairly and without equivocation. [Mr. Pitt intimated across the table that expressions in a former address pledged the House to this.] Mr. Fox said he wished to give the right honourable gentleman some credit for candour, but the right honourable gentleman so detested the thing that he could not endure even the name. He knew there were expressions in former addresses that might admit of such a construction; and, aware that they would be so construed when ministers found it convenient, he had warned, but in vain, the House against adopting them. If in the misfortunes of his country it were possible not to sympathise, he should feel some consolation in observing the effect of double-dealing; of using words in one sense, with the intention of their being understood in another; of courting the support of some men upon one interpretation, and of others upon an interpretation directly opposite. If the minister had said candidly and plainly in the first instance, "This war is undertaken for the express purpose of destroying the French government and, come what will, we can never make peace while that government endures," he might not, perhaps, have had so many supporters, but he would have been saved the unpleasant feeling of this day's difference with his friends. His eagerness to obtain the support of all led him to make use of equivocal words: and now his own friends told him that they did not interpret those words as he did; that they thought the destruction of the French government a desirable object if it could be accomplished on reasonable terms; but that if they had imagined that peace must never be thought of till that government was destroyed, they would not have voted for the war. Here was an instance of the minister's deriving no advantage from equivocation. Here, at length, was what he had so often laboured, but without effect, to obtain: a clear declaration of the precise object of the war, and of the terms on which alone we could hope for peace.

This led to the question of policy; and in proceeding to examine that question he found another instance of ingenuousness. The speech from the throne, the mover and seconder of the address, admitted that we had experienced disasters in the course of the last campaign. The two ministers who had spoken

on the subject both said " they would not deny " that the enemy had overrun provinces and taken strong towns. They would not deny!—astonishing candour! The accession of strength and integrity they had gained in the cabinet<sup>1</sup> inspired them with such confidence that they felt bold enough to substitute plain dealing for shuffling and equivocal—and " they would not deny " that the enemy had overrun provinces and taken strong towns—when the true statement was that never in any one campaign since the irruptions of the Goths and Vandals had such reverses been experienced on the one hand and such acquisitions made on the other. The French had not only driven the allies from France and retaken all the captured fortresses, but were now actually in possession of all the Austrian Netherlands, Dutch Brabant, a considerable part of the United Provinces, all the left bank of the Rhine except Mentz, part of Piedmont, all the province of Navarre and much of Biscay and Catalonia.—Then ministers were ready to confess that the French had taken strong towns! Were so many ever taken in any five campaigns in the history of modern Europe? He should be told it was acting the part of a bad subject to exaggerate the successes of an enemy: he would reply that he was acting the part of an honest member of parliament in telling the House truths which they ought to hear as the only grounds of deciding properly; and reminding them of disasters which not fortune but folly had brought upon the country.

On the means by which the exertions of the French had been hitherto stimulated much declamation had been wasted. If we were ever to be, unfortunately, in the same situation with the French, we should then make similar exertions, and not till then. Why not make similar exertions now? Because we had not similar motives. That we were fighting for our constitution, our liberties, religion and lives, did very well for rounding a period in a speech; but the people would believe none of all this, nor that they who said so believed it themselves. To him it was astonishing how any set of men who did believe it could have so worked themselves up as to risk such a war on the wild theories

<sup>1</sup> Previous to the meeting of parliament several changes in the administration had taken place. In July Earl Fitzwilliam was appointed Lord President of the Council, Earl Spencer Lord Privy Seal, the Duke of Portland Third Secretary of State, and Mr. Windham Secretary at War. Before the close of the year Earl Fitzwilliam was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and David, Earl of Mansfield (late Lord Stormont), succeeded to the Presidency of the Council. Earl Spencer was placed at the head of the Admiralty, and the Earl of Chatham was made Lord Privy Seal.

they had nourished in their own minds, or the applauses of those who were but too ready to applaud upon trust. To hear them one would think that no nation was at peace with France, or that, if any were, it must already be undone. Was Denmark, Sweden, or even Genoa, notwithstanding our tyrannical conduct towards it, in a state of anarchy in consequence of being at peace with France? Was America, whose own glorious constitution was founded on the rights of man? No such thing. With America the intercourse of France was great and constant; in America French principles, more than in any other country—the principles of liberty and equality—might be expected to find a genial soil; yet America was so far from being thrown into a state of anarchy by the growth of those dreaded principles that she had just obtained a very advantageous treaty of amity and commerce with this country—a treaty, as far as he had heard of it, which justice and policy would have dictated at any time, but which, he feared, the difficulties in which our ministers had involved themselves, rather than their justice or policy, induced them to give. Why, then, were we to be so much afraid of peace with France when so many other nations had made the experiment without any mischievous consequences? When men were attached to theories they shut their eyes against the plainest and the strongest facts. The French revolution had now subsisted five years and a half, and in the sixth year of it we were told that if we were to make peace with the present rulers of France, their terrible principles would spread anarchy and robbery and bloodshed, not only over this country, but all over the world. Yet, though their successes had been brilliant beyond example—and how far success imposes upon the bulk of mankind the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer could tell better than most men—except in the petty state of Geneva, the revolution of which he did not know to be upon French principles, not a single revolution had their example produced. To us, however, it was said that their intercourse in time of peace would be most formidable. From Calais to Dover they would pour in upon us so many missionaries. What! had they none already here? Had not ministers told the House and the public that, for more than two years, Jacobin societies, corresponding with the Jacobin societies of France, had been labouring, with indefatigable zeal, to propagate Jacobin principles? Happily these emissaries, who knew the habits, manners and language of our people, had been labouring without effect; nay, he was justified in saying so by ministers themselves; for, thank God, the king's



speech, for the first time these two years, had nothing of an alarm in it. There must, then, be something in the French language so agreeable, so soothing, so captivating, so intelligible to English ears, that French emissaries would be sure of success where English emissaries had laboured in vain for more than two years!

On the expression, "acquitted felon," which a right honourable gentleman had used, he hoped inadvertently, since he had thought it necessary to explain it, he should say nothing of how reprehensible it was, either in a constitutional or moral point of view. Of the societies then in the right honourable gentleman's mind, he believed the truest description had been given from the Bench, namely, that "they wanted numbers, arms, money and even zeal." This, he believed, would be found to be the accurate description of any society formed in this country for the purpose of overturning the constitution. That there might be a few speculatists in this country who would prefer another form of government to the present he had no doubt: there were such in every country; and even these seldom had much zeal. But the English language would not do to seduce the people of England from their allegiance to the constitution. French emissaries must come over and inculcate French principles in the French language. They must go among our labourers and manufacturers and, as the calamities of war had proved insufficient to rouse them, tell them they were now exposed to all the calamities of peace! The right honourable gentleman last alluded to complained of want of zeal in the country. Surely our soldiers had not fought with less valour, nor our officers with less skill, than in any former war. Whatever bravery or conduct could achieve they had uniformly done; but it must be recollected that the general exertion of a campaign depended upon the numbers brought into the field.

When he formerly made a motion in that House for peace, he found no want of zeal for war, no want of zeal to cry down any man who had the hardiness to oppose it; at least he found enough, and knew not to what greater length it could have gone unless they had expelled him the House or declared him a traitor, as they seemed to think a laudable practice in other places towards any man who opposed the will of the majority. What was the cause of that zeal? Contempt for the enemy and confidence in their own strength; and the cause being gone, the effect had ceased. Such would ever be the case with zeal founded on false principles. Why were the zeal and exertions of the

French less affected by ill-success than ours? Ministers would answer: "They force every man into the field who is capable of serving, they strip every other man of whatever they want for the service of the army, and amid misery, wretchedness and death they produce an unnatural exertion by means of tyranny and terror." At the call of necessity even such means must be resorted to. Were a French army to land in this country, declaring that they would make no peace with us till we renounced our constitution and accepted of a form of government according to their fancy, who would deny that every man capable of serving against them ought to be compelled to service, and that every sacrifice must be made by individuals to repel the common danger? Such acts in such cases, instead of tyranny, became a virtue; and he was surprised to hear men of correct minds deducing arguments from them of which they ought to be ashamed. "Would we submit," it was asked, "to treat with the present government of France?" Submit to what? Submit to the French having a bad government? Had we not submitted to this for more than a century? Had we ever found ourselves uneasy under our submission to Persia having a bad government? Had we not submitted to all the injustice, cruelty and slaughter perpetrated in Poland? Then it was asked, "Would we submit to propose peace?" If all nations were to stand upon this point no war could ever be concluded but by the extermination of one or other of the contending parties, for one or other must submit to propose peace. But to propose peace was no submission, no degradation. Peace had often been proposed by the victorious party, and this had always been deemed an act of wisdom and magnanimity, not of concession. What were all the other degradations and submissions but lofty words and unmeaning phrases?

We had once said that we would never treat with the present government of France. Take away this impediment to peace, and every advantage we obtained afterwards, if the war must be continued, would be something in our favour; whereas, while that remained, our successes would only stimulate the enemy to fresh exertions, by fresh sufferings and fresh sacrifices; for it was impossible to suppose that the French government would ever negotiate for its own destruction. Would not this give a clear sanction of justice to the war? Would it not produce unanimity with greater zeal and exertion at home by convincing every man that we were not at war for unreasonable or impracticable objects, but to bring an unreasonable enemy to equitable

terms of peace? But what might it not be expected to produce in France, where, as ministers said, the government was perpetually changing from hand to hand, and the loss of power marked the period of life? Ministers were always speculating on the internal affairs of France; why not try a little of this speculation? The convention, they said, deluded the people by telling them that they were waging a war of extermination. To offer to treat would put an end to the delusion, the people would open their eyes, and the convention must give them peace or meet the extermination which they were said to denounce against others.

The present state of the war was calamitous beyond example. We had gained Martinique, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia and part of St. Domingo in the West Indies, with Corsica in the Mediterranean. Our allies had lost all he had enumerated in the former part of his speech. If these astonishing exertions of the enemy by land had impeded their exertions by sea, it would be something; but, unfortunately, the prediction in one of the king's speeches, that their navy had received an irrecoverable blow at Toulon, was already falsified. Was it not true that a fleet had already sailed from that port superior in point of number to our fleet in the Mediterranean? Their naval exertions at Brest had afforded Lord Howe one of the most glorious triumphs in the annals of our history. If their navy had been such as ministers represented it at the commencement of the war, viz., a navy only upon paper, Lord Howe would not have had the glory of beating an enemy of superior force. But even that blow proved not to be irreparable, for they had now a fleet at sea which it was doubtful whether we could immediately collect a sufficient force to drive from the English Channel. These circumstances were matter of very serious consideration to every man who felt for the honour and safety of his country. If the war should go on, must we not expect, from what we had seen, that the enemy would again dispute with us the superiority at sea? The skill and courage of our navy he confided in as unmatched by any nation in the world; but skill and courage could not always compensate for inequality of force, and as our chance of victory was greater, so was our stake. The defeat of the French fleet, as we had so lately experienced, would be of little consequence to the general issue of the campaign, while the defeat of our fleet would be little short of absolute destruction. Why, then, expose us to such unequal risk? It was admitted, however, that when disaster had subdued obstinacy and extinguished hope, we must make

peace even with the French republic. Then, indeed, all that was now imagined of humiliating and degrading would be true; we must throw ourselves at the feet of those we had contemned and reviled, perhaps exasperated, and submit to whatever terms they thought fit to impose. Why expose ourselves to the bare possibility of such ruin? Why not renounce the visionary project of overturning the present government of France? If after that they abused the peace we made with them we should do as we had done with France before, contend for superiority with the same stake and the same exertion. If asked what terms of peace he would advise, he would answer that to adjust the terms was the business of ministers, who alone possessed the necessary information. Let them propose such terms as, on a consideration of all the circumstances of the relative strength of the contending parties, of what might be gained and what lost on either side, they should judge to be fair and equitable; and if these were refused we should be in a better situation than before, because both parties would know what they were fighting for, and how much the attainment of it was worth.

Another difficulty arose from the French royalists. Thank God, he was innocent of whatever might befall these unfortunate men. He had deprecated the war in the first instance, and after its commencement every act which could give the French emigrants reason to expect our support in their pretensions upon their own country. Next it was said: "Will you give up the West India islands; will you deliver over those men to the vengeance of their implacable enemies who, as the price of your protection, assisted you in taking those islands?" To these questions let them answer who had sacrificed the French emigrants fighting in our pay in almost every garrison we had been compelled to surrender, who had thrown men into situations from which they could not be extricated, nor yet receive the ordinary protection of the laws of war. These might be difficulties to the minister: these might be reasons why he could never be able to extricate himself from the business with honour; but it was the nation's honour, not the minister's, about which he was anxious.

The honourable baronet who moved the address had expressed his hopes of a unanimous vote in support of it. If it were to be voted unanimously this country could never make peace with honour; if there were a division upon it, part of the country would come out clear. In his majesty's speech there was no mention of allies; it was only said, "that his majesty will omit no opportunity of concerting the operations of the next campaign

with such of the powers of Europe as are impressed with the same sense of the necessity of vigour and exertion." Who those powers might be we were left to conjecture. The Dutch, however, we were told, were negotiating, and the King of Prussia, we knew, had failed. The honourable gentleman who seconded the address had given him the credit of predicting this failure, but had added that he himself had predicted the fall of Robespierre and various other matters which had also come to pass. The honourable gentleman might have predicted that it would be a dry summer or a rainy autumn; he resigned to him all the honour of prediction. For his own part, he had predicted nothing; he had only used the best arguments he was able to show that from the past conduct of the King of Prussia there could be no reliance on any engagement he might enter into with us; and the event had shown that those arguments were well-founded. The minister himself would not now promise us any assistance from the King of Prussia beyond his contingent as an elector of the empire, even on the treaty of 1787. But the emperor was to make a great augmentation of his forces by money borrowed on our credit. Why on our credit? Plainly because he had no credit of his own. Were there no moneyed men in the emperor's dominions? Were the capitalists of Europe so short-sighted, so slow in perceiving the advantages of an imperial loan that they could not see them till pointed out by our government? They saw the advantages; but they would not lend their money, because they knew the borrower was not to be trusted. The loan was neither more nor less than a subsidy under another name, a distinction so flimsy and so trifling as he had hoped never to have seen attempted by the ministers of great potentates.

Mark, then, the desperate situation to which we were reduced. The only ally from whom we had any hopes of efficient aid was the emperor; and from him, for the enormous sum of six millions, we might get as good and as useful a subsidiary treaty as was our treaty with the King of Prussia last year. The emperor, it would be said, had more faith—so it was said of the King of Prussia; but he had very little confidence in the faith of the cabinet of any absolute monarch. During the American war a noble marquis then commanding a separate army expressed his great surprise at finding the people of Virginia so like the people of Carolina. Next year we might have to express our great surprise at finding the King of Bohemia so like the Elector of Brandenburg. He would agree to put the whole argument on the opinion of any experienced officer who had served the last campaign on the

continent, whether or not there was any rational hope of co-operation between the English and the Austrian army. They hated one another more than either hated the French; and from the battle of Tournay, where the Austrians fought the whole day, or rather stood the whole day without fighting, and the enemy were repulsed by a detachment of the British army, their mutual complaints and recriminations had been incessant.

But the finances of France were exhausted, and therefore we ought to try whose finances would hold out the longest! Into this part of the question he would not enter, because we were told the very same thing last year, and on the very same arguments. The king's speech last year said the resources of the French were rapidly declining: but "rapidly" was only a relative term; they were again rapidly declining this year, and so they might be ten years hence. The fall of Robespierre—he seemed a great favourite on account of his power—it was said had relaxed the terror, and consequently the energy, of the French system. The fall of Robespierre, from the stress laid upon it, one would think a tale of yesterday; but when we looked at dates we should find that he was put to death on the 27th of July, and since that time there appeared at least no relaxation of the French successes. Moderation, it was contended, must weaken their government and cripple their exertions; he believed no such thing; he looked to general principles, and inferred that moderation gave strength. Why, it was asked, were we to look for less co-operation in the interior of France than formerly? Because there was no insurrection at Lyons, Marseilles, Toulon and, he apprehended, very little in La Vendée. Our resources, it was said, were not yet touched. No! This speech did not tell us, as last year, that the burdens to be imposed would be little felt by the people—an omission he much regretted, as it certainly was not made in compliment to his arguments on the impropriety of such an insertion. Would the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer say that if the war was continued another year the people had yet felt one-tenth of the new taxes they must have to bear? Taxes were felt by the poor, and their situation was particularly to be considered when the object of the war was so equivocal that it might be doubted whether the attainment of it would be desirable, even if it could be attained by making peace. Ministers appeared to know everything that was passing within France, but nothing that was passing out of it. Of the sailing of fleets from French ports, which it might be worth knowing, they had no information. Just so our

hostility seemed to do everything within France to raise a tyrant and to pull him down, but to do nothing out of France.

The depreciation of assignats was with him an argument of little weight. He had been accustomed for years to hear that the paper currency of America was depreciated, not to one-half or one-fourth of its nominal value, but to nothing. His information, however, differed entirely from that of the chancellor of the exchequer on the depreciation of assignats. On the ruined state of French commerce it coincided; but on the state of industry and agriculture it totally disagreed. He was told by American gentlemen, and these by no means partial to French principles, that at no former period had the cultivation or the produce of the soil been near so great. When he heard of the maximum and the expedients connected with it he inferred that the misery and distress of the poor must be necessary consequences. He was assured, however, that the poorer classes of people in France had now a much greater portion of all that to them constituted the comforts of life than had ever fallen to their lot before the revolution, or perhaps to the lot of many of the poor of this country. It might be said that his informants were inaccurate observers or false relators; but who were they from whom ministers derived their information? The very persons who, deluded themselves, had an interest in deluding ministers into the prosecution of a hopeless contest. He depended not alone upon the accuracy of those with whom he conversed. The circumstances they stated he found confirmed by the pamphlets of French emigrants.

But he did not rest his politics on the situation of France, of which his knowledge must be imperfect; he looked to the situation of England, which he had the means of knowing; he saw us involved in a war which must produce increase of debts and taxes, with no compensation even in prospect, and thought that the sooner we got out of it the better. Peace, it was said, would be insecure; we should not be able to disarm because the French could not venture to disband their numerous armies and bring back so many men without fixed habitations or employments into the heart of the country. Thus were ministers reduced to this curious argument, "We ought to continue the war, because the French have an army which they cannot disband." What the effects of peace might be in France, whether the old government would be restored, or a better system established in its room, were speculations which as a philosopher and philanthropist he might indulge in, but never as a member of parlia-

ment or a counsellor of his majesty adopt as principles of conduct. It was pretended that our hostility had already produced a change of system for the better; but on comparing facts with dates we should have more reason to say that our hostility produced the system with reference to which only the present system was admitted to be better; that our invading France had made Robespierre a tyrant, and our running away destroyed him. In giving his vote for the amendment, he should wish to leave out the words "transactions which have lately happened in France," because we were not to treat with any set of men on account of their good or bad characters, but on account of their possessing the power to treat. If, however, the gentleman who moved and seconded the amendment should object to leaving out those words, he should vote for it nevertheless. •

If we were never to treat with the heads of the convention but in such extremity as left no room for choice, when could we look for peace? He wished the chancellor of the exchequer would recollect that his honour and the honour of the country were two distinct things; and that it was too much to wait till the hour of extremity came merely that he might be able to say:

Potuit quæ plurima virtus,  
Esse fuit——

When he proposed treating, he held it more honourable not to wait till he was beaten into it. The country was already sorely beaten; it had received wounds both deep and wide, but the obstinacy of ministers was not yet conquered. Perhaps, as they thought upon the same principle, that it would be dishonourable to restore the conquered West India islands, they were waiting till the French should retake them. He knew not if this was their intention, but they had given the French ample opportunity.

If it were advisable to go on with the war, let us look at the conduct of it for two campaigns and see what hope we could have of success under the auspices of those who now directed its operations. Lord Chatham had retired from the admiralty full of glory, covered with laurels, for his able disposition of our naval force and the active protection he had given our trade. If the boasts of last year on this subject were true, it was unfair to check his lordship in the career of his glory and unjust to deprive the country of his services at so important a crisis. But the boasts of last year were not true; his retiring was a confession of incapacity or negligence; and if he had delayed it much longer there would have been petitions for his removal. To the West



Indies such a force had been sent as nothing but the great abilities of the officers who commanded it could have enabled to take the French islands and, when taken, was insufficient to defend them. To Toulon such a force was sent as was too small for defence, and too great to retreat with honour. The projected invasion of France had been kept alive from year to year, and served only to weaken our strength in quarters where it ought to have been more powerful, without even an attempt to carry it into execution. Were our cause as good as our resources were said to be inexhaustible, with such weakness, such want of system, such hesitating, such wavering incapacity in the direction of our force, we could hope for no success.

If the honourable gentleman who moved the amendment and his friends (for the honourable gentleman he felt great respect on account of the part he had taken in the abolition of the slave trade, a measure in which he felt deeply interested) thought that, in consequence of their aiding him to obtain a speedy peace, peace might be made without an inquiry into the causes of the war, he gave them notice that he would receive support upon no such terms. He would never forgo inquiry into the causes of the war and measures to prevent similar calamities in future. This was due to the people lest, in the enjoyment of peace, they should forget their former sufferings from war and again yield themselves up to delusion. Both the present and the American war were owing to a court party in this country that hated the very name of liberty; and to an indifference amounting to barbarity in the minister to the distresses of the people. It was some consolation to him that he had done his utmost to prevent the war, and to know that those who provoked it could not but feel, even while they were endeavouring to persuade others of the contrary, that they must, in no very long space of time, adopt the very course which he was recommending as fit to be adopted now. In the speech not a word was said of the navy. He should only observe that in our present circumstances the neglect of building a single ship that could possibly be built was a neglect highly criminal.

The House divided on Mr. Wilberforce's amendment:

<i>Tellers</i>	<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS { Col. Maitland } { Mr. Whitbread } 73.—	NOES { Mr. Serjt. Watson } { Mr. Sumner } 240.

So it passed in the negative.

## MR. GREY'S MOTION FOR PEACE WITH FRANCE

*January 26, 1795.*

MR. GREY moved, " That it is the opinion of this House that the existence of the present government of France ought not to be considered as precluding at this time a negotiating for peace." The motion was opposed by Mr. Pitt, who moved an amendment thereon by leaving out from the first word " That " to the end of the motion, in order to insert these words, " under the present circumstances, this House feels itself called upon to declare its determination firmly and steadily to support his majesty in the vigorous prosecution of the present just and necessary war, as affording at this time the only reasonable expectation of permanent security and peace to this country; and that, for the attainment of these objects, this House relies with equal confidence on his majesty's intention to employ vigorously the force and resources of the country in support of its essential interests; and on the desire, uniformly manifested by his majesty, to effect a pacification on just and honourable grounds with any government in France, under whatever form, which shall appear capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other countries." Mr. Wilberforce, not thinking the terms of the amendment sufficiently explicit, proposed to leave out from the word " declare " to the end of the amendment, in order to insert these words, " That the existence of any particular form of government in France ought not to preclude such a peace between the two countries as, both in itself and in the manner of effecting it, should be otherwise consistent with the safety, honour and interests of Great Britain."

Mr. Fox began by desiring the original motion and the two amendments to be read; and said that before he proceeded to give his reasons for preferring the original motion of his honourable friend to that which had been made by Mr. Wilberforce, though the difference between them was not very essential, he must take notice of the amendment which had been so unexpectedly made by the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer. He said unexpectedly made, because when the motion of his honourable friend was originally announced, which was three weeks ago, the terms of it even were settled; for his honourable friend, with more candour than prudence, had stated the precise words upon which they were to come to issue. The right honourable gentleman pledged himself to come to issue upon these words: but, however, he did not now feel so bold as

he did three weeks ago; he did not choose to meet the question directly. In his conscience the right honourable gentleman had said he believed the majority of the people were still for the war. This was his declaration: but the House and the public would infer from his conduct that he had not very great confidence in the truth of his own declaration; for, instead of meeting the question, which he had pledged himself to do, he had proposed an amendment by which he was to avoid a direct decision on it. In his speech, indeed, he still denied the proposition of his honourable friend. Then, why not fairly and openly negative it by a vote? After which, if he wished for a declaration, he might have moved his own amendment as a specific question. He took this course, he said, to avoid misrepresentation; and but for his desire of avoiding a misrepresentation which he had never incurred, he would have negatived the original question; when on the other side the honourable seconder of the amendment confessed that but for that amendment he would have voted for the original question. What, then, was the true meaning and intention of all this petty warfare, but that the amendment was designed to evade the great and material question upon which the right honourable gentleman stood committed, and to delude the House by a little temporary concession which meant nothing? Already the matter was loaded with contradictions; the mover and the seconder were at variance; the one affirmed, the other denied, and the whole was done merely to draw us from the clear specific question that had been for so many days in the contemplation of the House. The right honourable gentleman was undoubtedly a man of superior talents; but those talents being directed to delusion and quibbling, rather than to what was grand, manly and open, he did not show himself possessed of a mind equal to the circumstances in which he found himself. Instead of meeting the exigency of our present situation with measures proportioned to our critical condition, he seemed only anxious, by a little evasive management for the day, to gain over a few votes of irresolute members, as if a few votes more or less could alter the eternal nature of truth and falsehood, or to baffle a few petitions that might be coming to parliament, as if by lulling a few individuals into a continuance of their apathy for a time he could extricate the nation from the deplorable situation into which he had plunged it. These were not the resources of a great mind; this was not the conduct of a statesman in a moment like the present; it was as false to himself in policy as it was unworthy of the occasion; for it could serve

only to deaden the feelings of mankind for the day, and would collect the public indignation to burst upon him with greater force when the moment of delusion was past.

As to the amendment itself which the right honourable gentleman had moved, though he disliked it in many particulars, yet in some things he did not dislike it. In so far as it stated that there was nothing in the present form of the government of France which prevented our negotiating with them, he must approve of the proposition. He had moved an amendment both this year and the last to the same effect. Little did he think when he was making such proposition that he was only speaking the sentiments of his majesty's ministers. But these ministers, it seemed, were the victims of misrepresentation. So powerful, it appeared, was the opposition, so full of wealth, and so interested with the influence of bribes, places, pensions, jobs, contracts and emoluments of every kind, and so much had they the means of circulating newspapers that they had it in their power successfully to misrepresent his majesty's ministers, and to mislead and delude the public so as effectually to taint and abuse the public mind, and to make them the unhappy objects of their misrepresentation. Now what had they done? They had for two years successively moved an amendment to the address to his majesty on the first day of the session of parliament that there was nothing in the form of the government of France that ought to prevent this country from negotiating with them for peace, and for this they had been called the advocates of France, Jacobins, republicans, the enemies of their king and country, who were desirous to lower the British government and prostrate it at the feet of France, to introduce French anarchy into England, and even to destroy the constitution of England and to bring his majesty to the block. Now, however, all this was over, and it was found, though they did not know it, that in reality they were speaking only the sentiments of ministers. We were now come to a crisis when all this shuffling would be found unavailing, when these delusions would no longer succeed; their own contradiction was a good omen for the country; it proved that the unfortunate speech of his majesty at the opening of the session had made a serious impression on the public mind; and the right honourable gentleman therefore found that he must soften and lower his language; he must now attempt to do away the effects of that absurd, impolitic and, he might say, diabolical speech which he had put into the mouth of his majesty, in which our gracious sovereign had been made to stand between heaven

and the happiness of mankind; had been made to pronounce the doom of millions, and to declare an almost eternal war, for no possible purpose of rational benefit to his species; and that, too, when all the other princes of Europe, awakened from the delusion into which they had been equally led by their ministers, had seen their error, and had manifested their disposition to peace.

He desired to know what was the meaning of the right honourable gentleman's present conduct? Was he to understand that the right honourable gentleman meant to negative the proposition of his honourable friend? If he meant to negative it, why not do so by a vote? Mr. Fox said he knew that the present administration was composed of various and discordant characters. He did not know whether they all agreed in the present proposition; it would soon be seen whether they did so or not; but he could say that it would not redound much to their honour. If he were to describe it he should say it went far enough to disgrace the new colleagues of the right honourable gentleman, but not far enough to restore to him the confidence of the country. On the argument that had been used upon the occasion he should have little to say. There had been so much novelty in the right honourable gentleman's conduct that day, that he had not thought it necessary to introduce any novelty into his reasoning. The same trite, hackneyed and refuted arguments with which they had been fatigued so often were again renewed. France was declining fast in her resources, and this was a matter of rejoicing to England! How long were they to go on rejoicing in this decline? Their assignats were at a discount; there were a number of royalists; and much ridicule was thrown upon a simile of an honourable gentleman, who had truly said that all the same nonsense had been talked during the American war. But it seemed we had been successful in France. The various revolutions that had been produced in France had been effectuated through our means. This was a most singular argument, and went perhaps further than the right honourable gentleman intended; for it so happened that those revolutions had been good or bad in proportion as we had been beaten or prosperous. Whenever we had made the slightest impression upon France, or had the appearance of temporary good fortune, it was sure to be followed by, and perhaps to have produced, some dreadful revolution accomplished by the horrors of massacre and devastation. But on the contrary, whenever we had been defeated and forced to fly from the territory of France, they had never

failed to subside into a comparative tranquillity, and to have their internal condition meliorated. The argument of the right honourable gentleman was, therefore, that if they would permit him to go on in a system of disasters and defeats, it was incalculable what good it might do in France. Thus, when the Duke of Brunswick had penetrated to within sixty miles of Paris, there happened the revolution fatal to the monarchy of the 10th of August. When we were in the possession of Toulon, there happened the shocking and diabolical massacres at Lyons: but no sooner had we evacuated the place than they began to make atonement for the scandalous devastations. Immediately after the battle of Fleurus there happened the fall of Robespierre; and certainly it was true that in proportion as we had been discomfited and driven from the French territory, whenever the French found themselves relieved from our attack they had exerted themselves for their own deliverance from internal tyranny; and nothing could be more natural than this; for, animated by the enthusiasm of the cause of liberty, when attacked as they were they gave up every consideration but that of preserving their independence; but when relieved from this fear, they had as constantly rid themselves of their domestic tyrant.

It was said that ministers never had proposed to themselves the conquest of France. The conquest of France never was imputed to them; it was only said that they had proposed to themselves an object which nothing but the conquest of France could obtain. He had long ago stated his opinion on the extravagance of that proposition, and his sentiments were in print. Surely any man who ever did flatter himself with the possibility of making any impression on France must now be convinced of his error! A remarkable expression used in the course of the American war was most applicable to the present; it was said by a member of that House, so early as the year 1777 or 1778, that "he had looked at the American army every way; he had looked at their front, he had looked at their rear, he had looked at their flank, and he could not accommodate himself anywhere": and yet, after this opinion of a general officer, the war had been continued for four or five years. In the same manner we might truly be said to have tried France: we had tried the east, the north, the south, and we could not accommodate ourselves anywhere. He hoped in God we should not continue the experiment as we had done in the case of America. It was said as an argument against the proposition of his honourable friend,

that it would bind the hands of ministers in negotiating. It would certainly be impossible for them, after such a resolution, to say to the persons holding the government of France that they could not treat with them; but so far would that be from binding their hands that it would remove an obstacle, and surely it could not prevent them from stipulating the terms of peace. In truth, without this declaration there would be an obstacle in the way of treating, since the persons holding the government of France knew that it had been uniformly declared by our ministers that they could not treat with them.

But the consistency of the House of Commons stood in the way! He thought that there might now be an end of such declamatory nonsense. In all questions of policy nations must yield to imperious necessity: it would be obstinacy, and not honour, to persevere in an opinion when you became convinced that it was wrong; it was plain that men might at first have thought the present war just and necessary who were now convinced of the contrary; and surely they would act more consistently with the rules of honour to confess their errors the moment they were convinced of them. But there was nothing more curious than to hear the right honourable gentleman talk of the consistency of the House of Commons. What would become of his old steady friends, "existing circumstances"? In the case of Oczakow he had not hesitated to retract without a blush when he found the public opinion against him. He came forward and said that our means were not equal to the object: why could not he, therefore, now compare the object with the means? Surely the disasters that had happened, and the change in the present case, more than in the Russian armament, would justify him for retracting his opinion. He would do it with great advantage to himself, it would give vigour to England and take it from France.

But why, it was said, should we be the first to negotiate? It would be a humiliation forsooth to propose to treat because we were unsuccessful. Upon this principle it was almost hopeless that we could ever treat; for could it be expected that the French government would be the first to propose to negotiate when they knew that our ministers had twenty times said that no possible peace could be made while they continued in power? Let Englishmen ask themselves what would be their feelings if the same language had been used to us that we have used to the French? If, for instance, they had declared in the convention that they never would treat for peace with England until there

should take place a reform in the government of England;—would not every Englishman die before he would submit to ask to negotiate under such a declaration? Yet such a declaration we had made towards France. We must, therefore, do away the effect of our arrogant and impolitic expressions; and he had no hesitation in saying what he believed in his heart, that if we took away that obstacle, we should have peace; or if not, we should fight them upon equal terms; we should take from them the cause of their enthusiasm; we should take from them that which aroused every national feeling, which had carried them to those unparalleled exertions that had astonished and confounded the world. They would then no longer feel that they had to fight to extremity, or that they were besieged in their own country for daring to give to their own country such a government as they liked.

Did he propose to unman one ship? to disband one regiment? No, on the contrary, his proposition was to add vigour to the country; and surely we should fight as well after we had made a declaration that it was not our intention to reduce any people to slavery. Nor should we treat for peace upon worse terms if we were to treat before we were reduced to extremity. Mr. Fox referred to the history of the war of King William, and his having had the wisdom to conceal his design of altering the French government. The want of security for the continuance of peace might be pleaded for going on with any war. There was no positive security. Certainly we should have as much security now as in any former instance. If peace were to take place, the French must disband their armies, and if the mighty machine, which nothing but the diabolical confederacy of despots had erected, were once stopped, it would be impossible again to put it in motion. If this country had acted right, and had interfered to prevent that diabolical confederacy, all might have been well; France, though perhaps a more powerful neighbour, would have been less obnoxious; the king might have been now upon his throne, and all the horrors and massacres that had desolated that unhappy country might have been prevented. He ridiculed the idea of the influx of French principles into this country, for our own constitution could only flourish here; it had been more deeply rooted in our affections by the fatal experiments that had been made in France. He called to the recollection of Mr. Pitt the memorable expression of his venerable father, that they should die on the last breach before they granted the independence of America, and that the first act of his political life was to



sign that very independence which his father had deprecated. Necessity dictated the act, and he must now retract in the same manner his system with respect to France. Mr. Fox concluded by saying that he certainly preferred the motion of his honourable friend, which he had opened and supported with such luminous argument and irresistible persuasion, to the amendment of Mr. Wilberforce; but, at the same time, that amendment should have his support if the House thought fit to prefer the one proposition to the other.

The question being put on Mr. Grey's motion, the House divided:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS	{ Mr. Sheridan Mr. Whitbread }	86.—NOES	{ Mr. Neville Sir W. Young }
			269.

So it passed in the negative. A second division took place on Mr. Wilberforce's amendment, which was negatived by 254 against 90. After which Mr. Pitt's resolution was put and carried.

## KING'S MESSAGE RESPECTING A LOAN TO THE EMPEROR

*February 5, 1795.*

ON the 4th of February Mr. Pitt presented a message from the king that assurances had been received from the Emperor of Austria of his intentions to make the greatest exertions for the common cause in the course of the next campaign, provided that a loan of four millions could be granted him, which would enable him to employ a force of 200,000 men. The king was of opinion that such an arrangement would be beneficial to the common cause, and advocated the granting of a large loan in order that more forces might be supplied. On the following day Mr. Pitt moved to thank the king for his message and to grant the necessary loan.

Mr. Fox said that, after what had happened in that House that evening, he hoped he should not now be considered as exulting in the calamities of his country if before he spoke upon the subject of the message he requested the House to advert to what he had said in the course of the last session of parliament. He begged of the House also not to suppose that he was now speaking the language of passion or peevishness, as he had been told on a former occasion he was doing when he talked of the calamities of this country. He hoped the House would give him credit for what he said, that we were this day in a calamitous situation. This was what the House ought to feel when they were called upon to vote away, by millions at a time, the money of the people of this country. He hoped and trusted that the House would do him the justice he deserved; more he did not ask: which was to reflect that less than twelve months ago, at that unfortunate period when parliament agreed on granting a subsidy to the King of Prussia, he called upon the House not to adopt such a measure; and he said that, large as the sum was which was then asked for that subsidy, the consequence would be, if it was granted, that applications would come from other quarters, and to a still larger amount. Had not the event justified what he had said? He laid no claim to applause for what he had said on that occasion; there appeared to him no extraordinary sagacity required to make the prediction, as it was termed; it appeared to him to be the natural result of

what was then going on. The right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer had commenced his speech upon the subject now before the House with some general observations upon the policy of this country having certain continental alliances: he was ready to own that in a view of general policy it was prudent with regard to the interest of this country, and that especially in opposition to France, continental alliance for us was, generally, a good rule; but, like all good rules, it was subject to modification by circumstances. To be so bigoted to any rule as not to allow that circumstances might alter it was the highest absurdity in politics. The right honourable gentleman had expressed a great dislike to the practice of pushing arguments to extremes, and yet he himself had carried his argument to an extreme indeed: for he had said that it might as well be asserted that the emperor would break his engagement in the year 1895 as to say that he would break it in the year 1795, and that any modern power in Europe would be faithless to its treaty because Carthage had been so. Mr. Fox said he never did push an argument to that extent, nor had he any necessity for doing so in making observations on the treaties into which this country had entered since the present war: he thought he could see a closer connection between Prussia and Sardinia in the way of treaty for subsidy from this country than between Carthage and the emperor. With regard to what the right honourable gentleman had said that night, he asked the House if they did not recollect that last year, on the subject of the Prussian treaty, it had been word for word the same. This showed us that the opinion of the right honourable gentleman was never to be altered by events; and here he must advert a little to what the right honourable gentleman had said last year upon the subject of the Prussian treaty. He had then said a great deal upon the faith of the King of Prussia, his interest and his inclination; upon that occasion much was said on the fame of the King of Prussia, and the security we had from his desire for military glory, and from the interest he had in the contest. We all knew how the event happened upon the subject of that unfortunate treaty; and he confessed he believed that arguments which had been used then in favour of the King of Prussia, and those which had been urged this night in favour of the emperor, were just as applicable to the one as to the other of those two princes.

The right honourable gentleman, in the beginning of his speech, had said something touching the war; now, whatever he said upon that subject naturally excited curiosity. He had

said that the majority of the House thought with him that peace was unattainable at present. That might be the opinion of the majority of the House; but certain it was that the right honourable gentleman himself had, a few nights ago, prevailed upon the House to evade that very question by the amendment which he had moved upon a motion made with a view of settling that very question; and, therefore, it was rather too much to say in that House what was the opinion of the majority. The next thing to be considered was the right honourable gentleman's observations on the speech of M. Tallien in the national convention of France. By the way, he did not think the right honourable gentleman's information upon that subject was correct; but supposing it to be so, it amounted to nothing, for the whole of what was said, in the way that Tallien was alleged to have said it, was only the assertion of a man who might speak upon a particular point anything to answer a purpose which he had in view, when he was, as it was well known he was, opposed on that point, in that convention, by Cambon. The evidence of two men, contending for power in the way they were contending, he did not consider to be such as that House ought to rely on in the discussion of the important subject which was now before them: he therefore must entreat the House to be cautious as to the credit they gave to any account of the decay of the resources of the French: the resources of the French might fail, but it was the great business of that House to take care that the resources of England should not fail in contending with France; and would the right honourable gentleman say that, if this loan were entered into, and should be eventually paid by this country, it would be possible for us to carry on the war for many years to come? It was said that the money to be advanced for the loan could not be applied with advantage to the service of the navy. Possibly not for this year, but could it not be kept in reserve for future years? We ought to look to the means of continuing the war for any number of years that might be necessary. It was said that with the whole six millions we could not add a ship or a man to our navy at present. This was a little difficult of proof; for he doubted very much whether the application of some of that money to the service of the navy might not be very efficacious even for the present year; in future years it certainly might. But let it be inquired whether the right honourable gentleman's doctrine upon this point, although probably false with regard to our navy this year, was not strictly true with regard to the navy of France. Did the right honourable

gentleman himself believe that the naval exertions of France were in any degree cramped, although in future it was to be hoped they might be, for want of pecuniary resources? Did he think that France would now have a greater naval force if she had no continental armies to oppose the last campaign? The navy of France, notwithstanding all the exertions she had been obliged to make by land, was as great as her comparatively small commerce, and perhaps want of naval stores (which she did not want because she could not pay for them), would permit, and there was no ground whatever to suppose but that in the course of the present year it would be as great as money could make it.

With respect to the general policy of employing foreign troops in the war, he could not help arguing, from experience, that little reliance was to be placed upon them. The right honourable gentleman knew how much of the money of this country had been already squandered for such aid; and everybody knew what had been the conduct of our allies. It had been confessed that there were points in the conduct of the Austrians difficult to explain. He believed it not only difficult but impossible to explain those points in any satisfactory manner. It was no wonder the right honourable gentleman declined entering into a detail of conduct which involved everything that was suspicious. But ought he not, before the House voted such an enormous sum of money, to give some account of the conduct of the Austrians before Tournay? Ought he not to assign some reason for their precipitate evacuation of the Netherlands, and that, too, against every remonstrance of the commander-in-chief of the British forces? And afterwards, when the British army had been obliged to retreat, and by the apparent diminution of the French force there seemed to be a favourable opportunity for acting offensively, ought he not to give some account of the surrender of the captured fortresses? Ought not a British House of Commons to have these things explained before they reposed this unlimited confidence in the House of Austria? In the latter part of the campaign it was said the Austrians acted better. Possibly they might, for then they began to be paid for their trouble; but was it not notorious that the Duke of York was left at only thirty miles distance to judge of their intentions by speculations on their movements, as he might have done of the intentions of the enemy? Was not this recorded in the *London Gazette*; and did it not stand as a proof that there was no amicable concert or co-operation between the Austrian and the

British army? Were these points to be explained or were they not? Or was the House to be satisfied with being told that they were difficult? What was the case at Toulon? Five thousand Austrian troops were to sail from Leghorn to reinforce the garrison, but when these troops came to the place of embarkation, the commanding officer said he had orders not to embark till he received further directions from Vienna. When this was mentioned last year, the right honourable gentleman said it would be improper to inquire too minutely into the conduct of our allies—a very insufficient answer, as he then thought, and as it had since proved. But were we not now to have some explanation with respect to the conduct of Austria when we were going to enter into new engagements? We were not to reason, it was said on the present occasion, from our recent experience of the King of Prussia's conduct. The defence of that conduct, as well as all hope of future aid from that quarter, was now given up. The King of Prussia stood with the right honourable gentleman now as he long had stood with the public and long ought to have stood in the opinion of that House. It was now too clear to be denied that his real object had been the partition of Poland, to aid him in the accomplishment of which he accepted of a subsidy from this country. Might not this be the case with the emperor, who had also views upon that devoted country? But the House of Austria, it seemed, must be thought remarkable for consistency and good faith. Was it so? Read (said Mr. Fox) the two manifestoes issued by the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg in the case of Dumourier, and you will find nothing more iniquitous in all the reprobated conduct of the French. In the first he exhorts the French people to co-operate with that virtuous man, Dumourier; in the restoration of limited monarchy, with assurances of the most disinterested aid and protection on the part of the emperor. Five days after, finding the "virtuous" Dumourier not followed by his army, as had been expected, he issues a second manifesto recalling all the promises made in the first. Find an instance of greater perfidy in the history of the world—perfidy not exceeded by the conduct of the King of Prussia with regard to Poland. This was the ally to whose faith implicit confidence was to be given, according to the right honourable gentleman, who complained of putting extreme cases in argument. He was ready to say that he would trust neither Prussia nor Austria while their councils were directed by the same persons. This prudence the right honourable gentleman understood very well when he was arguing on the affairs of France, for then he frequently talked

of faith and confidence and security; and asked what faith could be reposed in Robespierre or Cambon, or any of the men who directed the government. He always insisted then on considering the character of the parties with whom we should have to treat, although only on the broad question of peace or war. Now, Mr. Fox said, he thought we ought to be more attentive to the character of those with whom we were to treat for alliance and co-operation in carrying on a war than of those with whom we were to treat simply for peace, for nothing could be clearer than that less security was necessary for the purposes of making peace than for making an alliance to carry on a war. The right honourable gentleman was offended at the expression of "German Despots," which he had endeavoured to turn as if it had been meant to term every monarch a despot. He hoped, nay, he knew and felt, that there was a monarch who had nothing in common with any despot on earth but the name of king. His honourable friend who made use of the expression (Mr. Whitbread) had styled these monarchs properly, for they had manifested to the world that their uniform intention was to make the increase of their power the rule of their conduct. He had called the King of Prussia a despot, meaning always the character of his councils, on various grounds. He had called him a despot on account of his treatment of that brave and meritorious man, La Fayette; whom, contrary to every rule of civilised nations, he had most shamefully and cruelly imprisoned. What was La Fayette's situation now? When the Prussian cabinet thought that they ought not to bear the whole of the odium, he and his companions in misfortune were transferred to Austrian prisons. What applications had been made in their behalf he knew not; but if report said true, the cabinet of Vienna, unable to avow what they had done in the face of the world, added to the infamy of their conduct by the falsehood and cruelty of denying that they were their prisoners. He hoped and trusted that the conduct of these despots of Germany towards these men would make a deep impression upon a British House of Commons, and never be mentioned but with abhorrence.

The right honourable gentleman had said that the emperor had various motives for maintaining the credit of his finances by good faith, of which he gave several instances, speaking, as he that night was, as chancellor of the exchequer for the emperor, in which character he knew it was essential to deny his despotism, for the finance and the power of a despot with respect to public credit always ran in an inverse ratio. With respect to his interest

in the war as an independent prince, he never could discover it; and with respect to his interest as head of the Germanic body, was what they had all read in every newspaper true or not? In concert with other members of the diet he had agreed that while preparations were making for another campaign serious endeavours should be made to open a negotiation for peace. Such was, in substance, the resolution adopted on the proposition of the Elector of Mentz. Let it be supposed that the empire, having done what we refused to do, viz. declared a readiness to negotiate with the French republic, should conclude a peace: upon what side of France was the emperor, as Duke of Austria, to make his attack? If the empire were at peace with France, would it be the interest of the emperor, or would it be in his power, to fulfil his engagement with us for continuing the war? We were now in a peculiar stage of the business, and it became us to consider our situation very attentively. Four millions were to be given to the emperor, for which he was to furnish 200,000 men, and perhaps two millions more for a proportionate addition of men. Now, should it not be inquired, should not the House be satisfied that this was in the emperor's power? He knew many well-informed men who doubted it exceedingly. He believed the emperor had it not in his power; but he was sure the House ought to know that he had both the power and the inclination before they granted him such a sum of money.

He now came to the emperor's resources and his ability to pay the interest, which the right honourable gentleman said might be safely depended upon. To this the answer was short: if the right honourable gentleman were a better arguer—if everything he had said were true—if even the emperor had still greater resources, he would find it difficult to persuade those who seldom judge amiss where their own interest is concerned, namely, those who had money to lend, men who were better judges of the solvency of a borrower than any minister could be. These were the men the minister should have convinced of the stability and wealth of the bank of Vienna. Had he done so? By no means. The emperor had already tried them upon better terms than were held out by the present loan, and had completely failed. He would say completely failed; if not, let the experiment be tried again. It signified nothing to make panegyrics in that House upon the good faith and honour of the emperor and upon the solvency of the bank of Vienna. Let the minister go into the city and hear the opinion of moneyed men. The answer it was easy to guess. It reminded him of what he



had said the other day on the verdict of a jury: "The verdict is 'not guilty,' and that satisfies me of the innocence of the accused." The answer of moneyed men to the emperor would be, "I will not lend you my money upon your own security." This would satisfy him of the insolvency of the emperor. Now let it be inquired what we must actually lose, even in the event of the emperor fulfilling his engagement. He offered a high rate of interest upon his own security. We enabled him by the proposed loan to borrow at a low rate, and as money and credit were both marketable, we lost precisely the difference. The right honourable gentleman seemed to doubt this, but it could easily be illustrated: suppose he had a ship of the value of £10,000, which was to sail to the West Indies without convoy: suppose it to be taken, what would be the exact loss? Ask the insurance broker the value of the insurance, and that would be the amount of the loss. This loan was more objectionable even than a subsidy. Subsidies in general were paid by monthly instalments, and if the services stipulated for were not performed we could stop further payments, as in the case of the King of Prussia. But could we do so here? By no means; for if the emperor should fail at any time to fulfil his engagement, we should still be obliged to pay the whole amount of the loan. If he should fail to pay the interest we should have to raise £450,000 a year to make it good, while for the same sum we could borrow ten millions on our own account. What security had we that the emperor would be able to fulfil his engagements? We all knew that his subjects, as well as those of the King of Prussia, were unanimous in their wishes for peace. Should he listen to them, and withdraw entirely from the contest, could we withdraw from the payment of the loan? No; the credit of this country would be pledged for the whole sum, and it might be impossible for us to recover a shilling of it. The right honourable gentleman had said much on the revenue of the emperor. He wished he had stated the particulars and the surplus after defraying the charges upon it. The Austrian Netherlands were the security offered for the former loan, but they were now gone. Did the minister himself really believe the state of the emperor's revenue to be such as to enable him to pay? If he was not able we might pronounce as many panegyrics on his honour as we pleased, but after all we must pay for him. He instanced the case of the Silesian loan, where the late King of Prussia refused to make good the engagement to private lenders. If that monarch, for despot he must not be called, could find a pretext for refusing to

pay private individuals, with how much more ease might a pretext be found between two nations? The situation of the country was indeed calamitous, but not so calamitous as it must soon become if this measure were adopted. This loan was to enable the emperor to continue the war only for twelve months. Would the minister say that this war would be terminated within that period, or that if it continued longer the emperor must not come every year for a like or a larger supply? We should remember the finances of the King of Spain: he might, and probably would, come for our assistance if peace was not soon agreed upon between him and the French. This was not, as he had been told on a former occasion, the language of peevishness and passion; what he had already said had been verified by the event, and what he was now saying he had too much reason to apprehend would be verified in the same manner. Was the right honourable gentleman confident that the war would terminate with the next campaign? And was he sure that this war, which he had undertaken for the sake of order, morality and religion, and with the concurrence and for the safety of all Europe, would not at last fall entirely upon us; that we should not have to pay all the expense of it on the part of Vienna, Sardinia, Naples, Spain and ourselves? That we should not have, in short, to pay for the armies almost of the whole world? He might be asked, if we did not do this what should we do? He would answer, add this money to our naval strength, and depend upon our own exertions, instead of depending on treacherous allies; for then we might be able even yet to sustain six or seven more campaigns; but by the present system that would be impossible. The conduct of ministers was highly censurable for the want of caution in this war. He was of opinion that the Dutch were not cordially with us in this war, and the event had justified the opinion. How stood the case with respect to the other powers? Were the subjects of the different states attached to this cause against the enemy? He feared that if we compared them together we should find they were not. He had reason to know that the King of Prussia had actually refused to put his troops under the command of a British general for fear they would revolt. He believed the same apprehension was entertained of the Austrians. He wished his Royal Highness the Duke of York could but take a chair in that House and give them the information he was possessed of upon that subject; for he was convinced that the effect of that information would be that we could have no rational hope of

the co-operation of the Prussians and the Austrians in the next campaign. This being our situation the question was whether it was prudent in us to go on with such enormous loans, or to trust to ourselves, to offer peace, but to prepare for war? He was sure he knew which was the wiser course, and it was not his fault if that House did not adopt it; if we went on upon such measures as that which was now proposed, we should drive ourselves rapidly to ruin for, in point of extravagance and folly, this measure was never equalled at any period of the existence of this country. The right honourable gentleman had stated that this loan was not to affect the supply of the year. So much the worse, for then the people would not now feel the effects of it, and it might come upon them on a sudden when they were unprepared for it, and the danger of that sort of delusive hope of security was one of the greatest evils that could happen to a people. He thought, therefore, that if this business was to go on, the better way would be to provide for it at once by raising taxes; then the people would see the real situation they were in and would know what burdens they must bear; whereas the other mode only tended to deceive for the present, in order to make their distress at a future day the more intolerable. There were many other objections which he had to this measure, but these he might perhaps submit at a future period. Mr. Fox then moved as an amendment that all the words after the word "desire" should be left out of the address.

The question being put, "That the words proposed by Mr. Fox to be left out stand part of the question," the House divided:

<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS	{ Mr. Rose Mr. Sargent }	173.—	NOES { Mr. Whitbread Mr. W. Smith } 58.

## MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR A COMMITTEE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION

*March 24, 1795.*

IN pursuance of the notice he had given,

Mr. Fox rose to move that the House should resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider the state of the nation. Similar motions, he observed, had often been made, though they seldom had been effectual; and undoubtedly some allowances ought to be granted, nor ought the House ever, in truth, to agree to do it without having reasons stated to them of strong political necessity arising from the circumstances of the country, the relative situation of other countries, strong instances of misconduct in ministers, or such other grounds as should justify the representatives of the people in resorting to one of the most solemn modes of inquiry known to the constitution. There were some circumstances, he was aware, in which that House would not agree with him in opinion; but there were others in which he believed there would be but one sentiment. Whatever opinion gentlemen might have formed of the general state of Europe, and of our prospects from the prosecution of the system in which we were engaged, however they might clash as to the measures to be pursued, there was one object in which they must all unite, namely, that such was the present state of this country that it was of the utmost importance that the House of Commons should stand high with its constituents, and that it should acquire their confidence by the attention and regard which they paid to their essential interests.

With respect to the motion he was about to make, it was not a new one; he had made a similar one in the year 1777, a time which was then considered as critical and perilous; and though the House did not think it expedient to accede to his motion, they could not resist the great truth of the danger in which the country stood, and in which they felt themselves by the surrender of our army at Saratoga. If the situation of the country was considered as critical and perilous then, how comparatively insignificant were the dangers of that moment to those of the present! Misfortunes now threatened every part of the empire.

Though at that time the majority differed from him as to the cause of the misfortunes of the country, they did not think it becoming the dignity of the House to decline going into an inquiry at so awful and momentous a crisis; they thought that they could not discharge their duty to their constituents when great expense was to be incurred, and great risks to be run, by refusing to inquire into the state of the nation, by which all the strength of our means would be fairly compared with the justice and value of the object to be obtained, and a retrospect would be had of the conduct of those who were entrusted with our affairs.

It was obvious that there was now much dissatisfaction in the country, not arising from the influence of French principles, about which, undoubtedly, there was much difference of opinion, but from the natural effect of a system which had produced so much misfortune and disgrace: a consequence which all the events of the war had served to heighten, as well as all the measures taken at home. There was not a mere majority, he said, there was almost a unanimity in favour of loyalty; but still there were some dissatisfied minds, and their number was daily increasing. These dissatisfactions had not manifested themselves by plots and conspiracies, the existence of which he always had and still doubted; but they did exist, and their origin was not affected to be concealed. They arose from the idea that the House of Commons was not the representative of the people—not even virtually the representative of the people—for they did not take upon themselves the guardianship of their rights, nor show the smallest alacrity in the superintendence of their interests. If such an opinion had gone forth, what better argument could the persons who were desirous to gain proselytes have than to say that even at such a moment as the present the House of Commons could sit still without bringing the executive government to account; without even going into an inquiry into the real state of the nation and into the measures which had uniformly produced such calamity and disaster? This argument would be greatly strengthened by the known fact that the general wish of the people was for peace, and that even those who were originally the most loud and vehement declaimers for the justice and necessity of the war were now eager for opening the door to an immediate negotiation and for the return of peace, and no longer anxious to catch at obstacles to treaty, but were truly and feelingly convinced that peace, if it could be obtained, was an object to be coveted above every

advantage that could be gained by the war. If, when the public opinion was so changed, the House should maintain a blind and implicit confidence in ministers, and should only show themselves desirous of imposing burdens on the people, and of supporting measures which were to induce new burdens, not only without driving ministers to negotiation, nor even to account for the millions of money and oceans of blood which they had squandered, but resisting a motion to inquire into the use that they had made of the confidence already granted them, what must be the advantage which was given to all the persons in the country who were desirous to spread the dissatisfaction which they felt, and to prove their assertions that that House was in reality lost to all the functions for which it was designed? There were no means by which their arguments could be so well countenanced, and by which they could so effectually spread the dissatisfaction which they themselves felt. In what way, except by invidious distinctions of declamations against the present ministry, could men like himself, who loved the British constitution, be able to defend it? How could they say that the constitution was essentially good when the House of Commons suffered such a train of misfortunes to pass before them, not merely without punishment, but without inquiry? They might be asked what they had to say in excuse for their supineness, or what possible answer they could give to the just charge of relinquishing their duty and of resisting the general voice of the people? They might say that the constitution could not be essentially good under which less attention was paid to the people even than in arbitrary governments. He had always thought that the best defence of the constitution of England was, not that it tallied with the theories of speculative men, not that in its letter there was more appearance of regard to the abstract ideas of liberty than was to be found in its spirit and practice; but that its best defence was its essential uses, its best character was that it had produced substantial happiness to man. Take away this argument, and leave it to those who were dissatisfied with our government to call upon its defenders to look at its practice, and to say that our executive government had gone on for two years in a system which involved an expense of blood and treasure beyond comparison, in an object which had been never explained, by measures which had uniformly failed, in which every one event had been marked either by disaster or disgrace, or by both; and that at the end of this time the House of Commons abetted the government in the continuance of the

same course, and it would be in vain to contend that the theoretical beauty of the constitution could be illustrated by its practice. They would naturally say, If this constitution be practically good, what constitution can be practically bad? What was the true character of a bad government? That the measures of a prince, though wicked and flagitious, might be persevered in for a time against the interests of his people. This was not always true; for the most despotic princes had not always been able to keep their ministers in defiance of the indignation of the country. If it were possible for the ministers of Great Britain to persevere in their measures under such a series of disasters as we had suffered not only without responsibility but even without inquiry, then the most just accusation against despotic governments would be applicable to this; and thus the advocates for the British constitution would be deprived of their very best arguments for its defence.

Convinced of this, he thought that if he did nothing but state to the House that we had been now two years engaged in a war in every part of which we had failed, in which all our measures had been disastrous, in which we had lost the object for which we at first pretended to undertake the war, and in which our enemy had gained more than the wildest imaginations of those who drove us into it ever ascribed either to their ambition or to their principles, he should require no further inducements to prevail on a House of Commons that was eager to discharge its duty to go into a committee on the state of the nation. He would not, however, content himself with this general argument. An inquiry into the state of the nation would divide itself into various branches. It would be impossible for him, in the course of the short time that he could hope to engage their attention, to go through the detail of all the circumstances which forcibly called upon the House to go into this inquiry; he should state only a few, but these, in his mind, would be sufficient to induce them, if they regarded their duty, to agree with him in his motion; for he owned he did not think it possible for any description of men to commit their reputation so far as to assert that they had done their duty to their constituents if they refused the inquiry.

The state of the nation (continued Mr. Fox), as I have just said, is undoubtedly to be considered in various lights. First of all, as to our own resources with respect to men; with respect to money; and with respect to the using of those men and that money for the purposes of the war in which we are engaged. But

these resources of men and money, and the manner in which they are to be used, are not only to be considered by themselves, but we are likewise to consider from whence those resources flow—the state of population, manufactures and commerce, and the general prosperity of the country. When we have done this we must go next into a consideration of our connections abroad. We must take a survey of our allies, the dependence to be placed on them, the situation of those allies, and the state, not only of their will, but their power to act, and to serve the common cause. And even when these points are considered there will remain others of equal importance to be discussed: I mean with respect to the principles on which we have hitherto carried on the war and on which we are likely to continue it. It is material when we are engaged in a war, particularly of this kind, which has been qualified by so many different epithets, and on which the eyes of mankind are so peculiarly fixed; it is material, I say, that in such a war we should invariably maintain the character of moderation, humanity and justice, without which it is impossible that we should also support the character of vigour and exertion, of wisdom and prudence. These are part, and not the least important, of the resources of a country. They are important in another view, because it is essential to consider whether we have carried on the war with justice and vigour, with wisdom and prudence; and though I believe the contrary will turn out to be the case, yet if it should appear that the war was not only just in its origin, but that we have acted in the prosecution of it vigorously and wisely, then I am afraid the result will be complete despair. If our conduct in the management of the war has been marked with vigour and wisdom, and we have been more than two years exhausting our resources ineffectually, I wish to know if neither from a change of measures nor a change of councils I have any reason to look for better success in the future operation of this war; I wish to know, I say, what other inference I can draw but that of absolute irremediable despair? If that be the case, the result of an inquiry into the state of the nation will be that confidence ought to be given to the king's ministers. For however calamitous the present state of the country may be, if it was brought about without any fault of theirs, undoubtedly confidence ought not to be withdrawn from them. But even in this case an inquiry will be material, because it will lead to a discovery of the true causes of our failure and of the present distresses of the country, and prove the necessity of abandoning the pursuit of an object which experience has taught



us cannot be obtained. The inquiry will be even advantageous to ministers, by showing that they have acted with justice, wisdom and vigour in the steps which they have taken, though they have been unfortunate in the result. But if it should turn out, as I suspect it will, that ministers have not acted according to any of the principles I have now stated; if it should appear that they have neither acted with justice and humanity, nor with wisdom and vigour, then it is possible that the object may still be obtained, though the means must be varied. But, as I have already said, if ministers have acted with justice and vigour, then the result must be perfect despair; and it belongs to this House to force ministers, if unwilling, to abandon an object which a period of upwards of two years has proved to be unattainable. For that object, which experience has shown cannot be accomplished by ordinary means, must be bad, and ought no longer to be pursued.

Now, sir, with respect to the first branch, I have premised that it is impossible for me to state with accuracy to the House the loss of men in this contest; and if the House goes with me into a committee I should certainly wish to have laid before them an accurate return of the loss of men since the commencement of the present war. First, with respect to the loss of the British as the most important part of the subject, we have had a paper laid before us this session which, from what appears on the face of it, cannot possibly be correct. I have compared it with other accounts, on which I admit I have not the highest reliance, those detailed in the *London Gazette*; and I find a considerable difference between the loss of men as stated in the gazette and that in the paper which now lies on our table. The paper upon the table, by giving a return of the privates only, and by omitting to give any return of the officers, sergeants, drummers, etc., diminishes our loss in appearance at least one-tenth. There are also losses mentioned, although perhaps not specified in the gazette, of which no return is to be found in this paper. There is one general item to which I wish to advert; an account of a considerable loss about the 9th of May, and of which no notice whatever is taken in the paper upon the table. I have heard there was some loss of British at Nieuport; British standards were taken at Valenciennes and Condé, and therefore there must have been a loss of British troops also in that quarter. The loss at Bergem-op-Zoom is not enumerated in this account. I mention these circumstances to show that if any gentlemen imagine that there was no loss of men during the last campaign

except what appears from the paper on the table, they deceive themselves grossly; and there is but too much reason to suppose that ministers have concerted among themselves to make the loss of British appear less considerable than it really is. I have seen returns, which I believe to be authentic, which make the number of British in the month of September last 26,000 men. Now, are there any hopes, when that army shall come home (and the sooner it comes home the better), that the loss out of that number will not be much greater than we have been taught to believe? Are there any hopes that half of that number will return? A list of the wounded, killed and missing will not be sufficient, because undoubtedly in every army there is much mortality not included under what is generally called the loss of men; therefore, instead of calculating the loss from the number of killed, wounded and missing, we must examine the general state of the army. We must compare its numbers at different periods, and include mortality of every kind. We must not only look to the army in Flanders, but we must look to our army wherever it is stationed, whether in the East or West Indies, or on the continent. We must also attend to the number of recruits that have enlisted since the commencement of the present war, and, by comparing the number of these and the general state of the army at different times, judge from a view of the whole circumstances what has been the real loss of men. If we follow this method, which I take to be the only just mode of calculation, then I believe we shall find that the loss of men sustained in this war has been such as will make every thinking man who knows anything of the state of the population of this country reflect seriously whether we can afford to substitute new armies for the old.

But we ought to ascertain not only the loss of men in the British army and navy, but also the loss of all troops in British pay. When that article comes to be stated I believe we shall find the loss to be even greater than that of the British. That loss, it is evident, must likewise be taken into the account. But this is not all. If we consider that this is a war in which we cannot act but through the medium of great continental alliances, it becomes a most material part of the consideration to state also the loss of our allies. Is it or is it not true that, in the course of the last campaign only, the number of prisoners of war who surrendered to the French republic amounted to more than 60,000 men? If this be true, ought it not to induce a British House of Commons to go into this inquiry before we proceed further in a war which

has brought so many calamities upon all who have had any share in carrying it on, and which has occasioned so dreadful an exhaustion of blood and treasure? Ought we not to go into a committee of inquiry to satisfy ourselves of the real state of our population and to ascertain whether the country is able to bear such drains of men for the purposes of war? If we go into this inquiry I will venture to assert that, during the last campaign only, more than 60,000 men of all descriptions surrendered to the French republic. It is supposed, and I trust it is true, that this country has of late years increased greatly in population. That increase, however, has not been in proportion to its increase of wealth and prosperity. From some documents which were recently laid before the House we find that the number of houses in Great Britain now paying taxes to government does not materially differ from the number of houses paying taxes to government in 1777, a period of eighteen years, during which we are supposed to have advanced considerably both in point of wealth and splendour. I know that many persons reject this account, and say it cannot be true because it is contrary to general observation. Now, with respect to houses paying taxes, it most certainly is correct: and it may be asked whether the great increase of houses of late is of such as pay taxes or of cottages of the lower sort which are exempted? I have one more observation to make on this paper. In looking it over I immediately turned my eye to those places where I conceived the population had most increased. I looked at Middlesex and Lancaster and I found, according to this paper, that the increase there has been considerable, and likewise in some other places; but that in other counties of Great Britain this increase seems to be balanced by a general decrease; and therefore the paper on the table, though not wholly to be relied on, is not wholly to be rejected. The increase in the two counties of Middlesex and Lancaster, which I have just mentioned, confirms the accuracy of the statement. The result, then, seems to be that the population of Great Britain has not increased in proportion to its apparent wealth and prosperity, and that it cannot afford to repair the loss of blood which it has already suffered by the war.

But it may be said that his majesty has other dominions from which resources of men may be procured. I particularly allude to Ireland, to which, before I sit down, it may be proper for me to advert. There is no one circumstance in which our sister kingdom, from her happy connection with this country, is of more importance than in the number of men which she furnishes

to the army and navy of Great Britain in time of war; and if, by any strange and crooked policy, that country should be alienated in affection from this, and lose that zeal which has commonly distinguished her in the public cause—I say, if any misguided policy should unfortunately produce such an effect, it is obvious that all the observations I have made on the population of this country, and its inadequacy to support such a ruinous war as that in which we are now engaged, will be strengthened to a degree which those who are not well acquainted with this subject can scarcely conceive.

The next article of resource which I mentioned is that of money. We have in the course of this war funded somewhat above fifty millions, and when we add to that the increase of unfunded debt, we shall find we have already incurred an expense of between sixty and seventy millions, and the permanent taxes which have been imposed in consequence of the present war cannot at this moment be much less than three millions sterling. Now it is said that though the permanent taxes of the country have been increased in order to supply the exigencies of the state, yet they are not such taxes as will be felt by the people in general. How far some of them have been well selected or not is a question on which I shall not take up the time of the House to discuss. I shall only observe that if they are necessary they must be borne unless better can be substituted in their place. But to say that the taxes of last year, and particularly those of the present, will not fall, and fall with terrible weight, on the middling ranks of the people, is to speak without any knowledge of the situation of the country. It is true that it is proper to tax luxuries in preference to the necessities of life: it is proper to tax heavily the higher orders of society, because they are well able to bear the burden. But it has been falsely supposed that in proportion as the rich are taxed the poor are relieved. In the present state of this country those taxes which ministers call taxes on luxuries fall heavy indeed on the most numerous class of society, and consequently must fall with peculiar pressure on the poorest. The idea of imposing taxes which shall fall upon one class only, and shall in no degree be felt by the others, however plausible in theory, is in fact an idle dream. We cannot lay a tax on the poor that will not fall on the rich; and, I am sorry to say, it is not possible to impose a tax on the rich which will not be felt by the poor.

But let us admit for a moment that these three millions are not a burden too heavy for the people to bear—if this war is to

go on, let me ask the right honourable gentleman opposite whether he has considered of the absolute necessity of imposing burdens for the next campaign to as great an amount, and possibly to a much greater than any which this country has yet experienced? For if the war goes on, our burdens must necessarily increase in proportion to the length of its duration. Let it not be said in answer to this, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." This is not an answer fit for a statesman to make, nor is it the answer which a British House of Commons ought to receive. This House ought to calculate on the continuance of the war, and to consider what are the resources by which it is to be supported. We ought to consider how far the people are able to bear more taxes, and the different branches of our trade and manufactures capable of supporting additional duties, for that more will be necessary in the course of the next year is what no man will dispute. Do not all these circumstances incontestably prove that it is the bounden duty of this House to go into an examination of the present state of the country and to prove to our constituents and to the people at large that, as we have not spared their blood and treasure, so we will not spare our own labour or responsibility? It is only by entering into this investigation and by comparing the object with the means that we can determine whether we ought to renounce the object or change the means by which that object is to be obtained; or whether we are to continue the same hopeless object with the same hopeless means; whether with the same administration, with the same advisers, we are to persevere in a system which has hitherto produced nothing but misfortune and misery.

It is said, however, that our resources are supported by the trade and manufactures of the kingdom, and that these are in a most flourishing condition. In order to see how far this assertion is well founded, let us a little examine the state of the trade and manufactures of the kingdom; and first of its manufactures. I wish to refer to those counties where the manufactures of Great Britain have been carried to the greatest perfection, and to know of gentlemen who are better acquainted with the state of those counties than I can pretend to be, what effect the present war has had upon them. I wish to know whether the manufactures have not been most materially injured by the war; and whether the circumstance of their appearing to have suffered less last year than in the year preceding was not owing to our gaining the possession of the French West India islands. I wish to know whether this was not one of the fortunate circumstances which

had the effect of affording a temporary relief, but to the duration of which we cannot look with any reasonable prospect. On a former day, when the right honourable gentleman opened the ways and means of the year, flourishing accounts were given of the amount of our exports of British manufactures in the years 1792, 1793 and 1794. We were told that the exports in the year 1792 amounted to upwards of eighteen millions sterling; that the exports in the year 1793 were less than those of 1792 by four millions; and that the exports in the year 1794 exceeded those of 1793 by two millions, and consequently were only two millions short of 1792. Now, the loss of the first year of the war being two-ninths of the whole exports of British manufactures must strike at the very root of our commerce. This is a loss which must impress every man, and must go to affect the very basis of our prosperity. The circumstance of the exports of British manufactures last year being two millions more than they were in 1793 is easily to be accounted for. I appeal to those gentlemen who are best acquainted with the commercial districts of the kingdom whether it was not in a great measure owing to the sanguine speculations of some merchants in consequence of our lately acquired possessions in the French West India islands. I would ask those who are acquainted with the county palatine of Lancaster what has been the diminution of population since the commencement of the present war. I have seen papers myself, the contents of which, if the proposed inquiry is entered upon, I shall state to the House. According to those papers the diminution of population and of manufactures in Manchester and its neighbourhood was truly alarming. We have no very accurate mode in Great Britain of ascertaining the population of the country. We have no better method, I believe, than by taking the number of marriages and baptisms. I have seen papers with regard to a great number of parishes in the most populous part of Lancashire; and the diminution, taken from a calculation of marriages and baptisms, is in some places one-half, in others one-third, and in none less than one-fourth. In all there is a diminution, and in the largest parish of Manchester it is estimated at one-half; and that to a number so large as to make the total diminution of the inhabitants amount to about twelve thousand. That this should be the consequence of the war is exceedingly natural. But I would ask the House whether, when the very existence of the country is at stake, it does not become them to ascertain the truth, which can only be done by an inquiry into the state of our population and of our manufactures, instead of

trusting to the absurd and idle expressions of the inexhaustible resources of the country. The information we might receive from a serious inquiry into the real state of our population might induce us to change our means, or perhaps to change our object.

Now, sir, another part of the resources of this country is our trade and commerce as distinguished from our manufactures. With respect to the trade of this country, when I made a motion last year for an inquiry into the conduct of the admiralty, after taking considerable pains to state a variety of instances where, as I conceived, the admiralty were highly negligent of their duty in not protecting the trade of the country, I received this short answer, "Look to the low rate of insurance." Having found that to be an argument so powerful with the House, I took some pains to inquire into the state of insurance, and will state some circumstances on this subject which appear to me to afford sufficient ground for going into the proposed inquiry. It may be supposed that the motion respecting the admiralty might give rise to an opinion among the underwriters that it would induce ministry to be a little more attentive to the protection of our trade in future, so as to make the risk somewhat less. I am not now deciding whether that be true or false; but it certainly was calculated to keep down the rate of insurance. The fact, however, is that insurance from that time has been uniformly rising until it has come to its present most enormous rate, a rate so enormous as the House may perhaps find some difficulty to believe till the fact shall be ascertained by an inquiry. At present, insurance from this country to Jamaica and to the other parts of the West Indies, with all the alliances we possess, is as high as it was in the late American war, when this country had to contend with France, Spain, Holland and America. With so many powers in confederacy, and France now our single enemy, insurance to the West Indies is as high as it was at that time when we had so many powers leagued against us, and when the fleets of France and Spain united were confessedly superior in number to the fleets of Great Britain. With regard to the Mediterranean trade, strange to tell! at this period, after all that we have expended on the fleet there, insurance to that quarter is much in the same situation as it was during the last war.

With respect to the trade with Spain and Portugal the present rate of insurance will appear to be as high as I have now stated it. With respect to the state of our trade with Spain, I understand that it is totally stopped with some of the ports of that country on the ground that insurance is so high that the trade cannot be

carried on. The insurance from Great Britain to Bilbao or to Barcelona is from twenty-five to thirty guineas per cent., and to add to this the merchants are not only obliged to insure the cargo, but also the premium on it, otherwise they would only receive £70 in the hundred: admitting the premium to be from twenty-five to thirty guineas, the real rate of insurance must then be from thirty-six to thirty-seven per cent. Now, whether it is possible that the trade of this or of any other country can support such a rate of insurance, it is for those who are better acquainted with this subject than I am to explain. I believe no trade whatever can go on with this rate of insurance, and therefore another mode has, I understand, been adopted: that a great part of our manufactures have been sent to Hamburg and from thence have been conveyed in neutral vessels to Spain and Portugal. The same fatality that has accompanied every part of the war has been felt here; the price of insurance between this country and Hamburg, which was formerly only one or one and a half, has now increased to ten per cent. When this subject was last before the House facts were adduced to show that insurance was not only very low, but extremely advantageous to the underwriters. But is not the fact now directly the reverse? Has not the credit of the underwriters been greatly diminished in consequence of the losses they have lately sustained? Although individual underwriters may be found who will underwrite policies at seven per cent., merchants prefer paying companies ten per cent. on account of their superior security. So low is the credit of the underwriters! This clearly shows that, high as the premium is, it has not been high enough to insure the underwriters. I mention these facts with respect to insurance because without them my argument would have been incomplete. I have not stated the present rate of insurance with any view to show how ill our naval force has been employed for the protection of our trade; but I have stated it merely to prove that, from the high price of insurance, there is every reason to believe that trade and commerce, the great basis on which our revenue stands, are affected in a considerable degree, and therefore that it is of the utmost importance to consider the real state in which at present we stand.

I now come, Sir, to the next point to which I alluded—I mean our connection with other nations. It is hardly credible that a British House of Commons should so far forget their duty as to vote away sums never before heard of; and persist in the prosecution of a war without even knowing whether we have allies



or, if we have any, who they are; what are their situation and circumstances; and what their abilities and inclinations. It is material for this House to know who the allies of this country are. I have frequently asked the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer questions with respect to the emperor and the King of Sardinia, but I have never received any satisfactory answer. Is the King of Prussia an ally of this country at this moment, or is he not? Am I to take it for granted, without giving myself the trouble to inquire, whether so material a personage is or is not our ally? I know he was our ally by treaty in 1788; I know he was our ally by convention in 1793; and further that he was our ally by subsidy in 1794: but I ask whether he is our ally at the present moment? Did the King of Prussia fulfil the treaty for which the subsidy was granted? If he did, why was it discontinued? If he did not, ought not this House to be apprised of his breach of faith? Ought not this House to be informed of the moment in which he ceased to be our ally? It is indispensably necessary, for the honour of this country, that this House should have a perfect knowledge of the whole of this business; for without that knowledge we cannot pass a judgment on the conduct of the King of Prussia. If, when we go into this inquiry, we find that he has kept his engagements with this country, we shall be enabled to do justice to that much injured monarch. But if, as I suspect, he has not, is it not fit that this House should call to account the king's ministers for having squandered away such immense sums of the public money? An inquiry, in every point of view, will be productive of advantage; for, by going into a committee, we shall be enabled to see distinctly whether the King of Prussia has fulfilled his treaties; and if he has, I am sure this House will be disposed to do ample justice to so good a prince. But if the contrary shall turn out to be the case, if it shall appear that he has notoriously failed in the performance of his engagements—is it not material that this House should declare its indignation at such a conduct and show that they will not tamely suffer themselves to be so duped by any prince in future? If the King of Prussia is no longer an ally of ours, what becomes of his other treaties? Let me remind the House that the King of Prussia was to send into the field 62,000 men, but that we were only to pay for 30,000. In consequence of the treaty of 1788 he was to furnish us with 32,000 men without any additional subsidy; what, then, has become of that treaty? We readily gave a subsidy to the King of Prussia to furnish us with 30,000 men.

He was bound by a former treaty to furnish us with 32,000 men for nothing; but it now turns out that we have not only lost the 30,000 men we subsidised, but also the 32,000 we were to have for nothing in virtue of his previous engagements. Now I ask, is such conduct to be borne? and are we to be told of the advantages to be derived from alliances with regular governments, and of the dependence to be placed on the regular government of Prussia? France is not a regular government, and we have heard much of the danger of treating in any shape with her: but Prussia, we were told, we may rely on; and the result has been that, instead of having what we stipulated and paid for in the last instance, we lose what we were entitled to by previous agreement. And, notwithstanding this flagrant conduct of the King of Prussia, a British House of Commons consents to squander away the wealth of the country, to lose the whole army supposed to be purchased by it merely because the minister chooses to say he is not informed of the particulars of the breach of that treaty! The question now is whether this matter is to be inquired into or not? The minister adds that, even admitting that the King of Prussia has not sent into the field the armies he undertook to send, it is not thence, in fairness of reasoning, to be inferred that our other allies will not be faithful to their engagements. I have heard it asserted in this House that the King of Prussia continued to execute a part of his stipulation for a considerable time and that the payment on our part was discontinued when he failed in the performance of his engagement. It was asserted by an honourable baronet that the part he acted was more beneficial to the common cause than if he had strictly and literally conformed to the terms of the treaty. Let this curious assertion be inquired into and ascertained. If it shall be proved, let the House do their duty and render justice to that ill-treated monarch; let them declare that ministers have acted towards him with treachery and injustice; or if not, let them do justice to ministers and declare that their conduct has been wise and upright.

But, Sir, I have at this moment no certain means of information as to what we have to look for from the prosecution of the war. I have read in some of the newspapers that the King of Prussia is sending a large army to the Rhine, and in others that he considers the Rhine as a proper boundary for France; it is said by some that he is marching towards Westphalia against the French, and by others that he is marching against the allies. Now we ought to know precisely the truth. I wish to ascertain

what probability there is that he will be our ally, that he will be our enemy, or that he will remain in a state of neutrality? What demands have been made from this country with a view to an explanation, and in what manner he has treated the applications of the British ministry for that purpose? I want to know what communications have passed and what remonstrances have been made; for remonstrances must have been made, or ministers must have grossly neglected their duty. The treaty of 1788 was a defensive treaty. France declared war against us; and therefore, say the gentlemen on the other side of the House, we were forced into the war by their aggression. I confess I shall doubt their sincerity unless they have called upon the King of Prussia to perform his treaty. Although his majesty's ministers might say to the King of Prussia, "We have been attacked by France and therefore call upon you to assist us, agreeably to your treaty," that monarch might have replied, "No; I know better, though you have procured a confiding parliament to say so; you were the aggressors, and therefore I am not bound in consequence of my treaty, which was only defensive, to furnish you with 30,000 men." I ask the House whether they can so far betray their constituents as to go on without inquiring what the conduct of the King of Prussia has been towards this country and what our conduct has been towards him.

There is another answer which may possibly be made by the King of Prussia in vindication of his conduct, and which would explain the assertion of the honourable baronet. He may say, "The object of this war was not the saving or gaining of this or that particular province, the capture of a town, or the recovery of a fortress. The object of it was the suppression of those Jacobin principles that were subversive of all regular governments." He may say (as has been stated by an honourable baronet), "I have done better for you than you have done for yourselves. It was essential to crush Jacobin principles in Poland. You fought for morality, religion and social order. I fought to suppress those anarchical principles which went to the destruction of all regular governments. Who was of the greatest service to the common cause—he that took a town, a city, a fortress or an island, or he that prevented Jacobin principles from taking root in Poland, and dashed the cup of rising freedom from the lips of that abominable people?" The destruction of even one man—the destruction of Kosciusko—who by his character gave credit to the cause of liberty, and by the

ardour of his zeal animated the sacred flame in every congenial bosom throughout Europe—what signified the recovery of Flanders or the preservation of Holland, to the capture of Kosciuscko? The destruction of this man, and with him the seeds of growing liberty, tended more to the success of the real cause of the confederacy than any co-operation with their troops which might have been the means of saving Holland or of recovering Brabant. If so, the country should know, through the medium of this House, that his majesty's ministers have advanced twelve hundred thousand pounds to the King of Prussia to enable him to subdue Poland; for without our assistance he could not have effected what he has done in that country; and if he had not been employed in that quarter he would have done as much for the common cause against France as he has done—which is just nothing. Does it not become us to inquire into this business in order that we may drive disgrace from ourselves to those on whom it ought to attach?

The King of Prussia, I suppose, is no longer to be considered as our ally; but if he is, let us look to his ability, and consider how far he is to be depended upon. From an authentic paper I find him stating to the diet of the empire his situation; in which he declares it is utterly impossible for him to continue the war. He announced, about twelve months ago, that he had actually begun to withdraw his troops from the Rhine homewards on the ground of his incapacity, in a pecuniary point of view, to support such large armies; and he continued to withdraw his troops until he received assistance from us. It is therefore clear that, without additional pecuniary aid from this country, whether willing or unwilling, he is totally incapable of prosecuting the war; and therefore, if we are to look upon him as an ally, he must be subsidised or hired; nay, possibly we may be obliged to purchase his neutrality—and even in that case I know not but he may make us pay for every one of his troops. Considering, therefore, the King of Prussia as much more likely to assist the French than to co-operate with us, we must regard him as a person gone off from the alliance.

I now come to our great friend the emperor. I am told that it is most unjust, indeed, to reason from Prussia to Austria, or from Leopold to Francis; that the present emperor is a personage of unsullied integrity; that we are not to judge of him from the character of some of his predecessors; and that we are to consider the court of Vienna as completely unblemished in point of honour. We find that the emperor has made declarations nearly

to the same effect as those of Prussia. In the declaration published by the Prince of Cobourg he says to the people of Germany, "You must take your plate from your table—you must take your plate from your altars—you must collect all your valuables, whether profane or sacred—you must put all the property you possess in a state of requisition; for without such extraordinary exertions the emperor cannot carry on the war." But, it may be said, we will enable him to come forward with a large force by granting, in aid of his resources, a loan of four or six millions. Now if the emperor, either from inclination or inability, should fail in his engagements and should, contrary to his character for good faith, neglect to perform his treaty, we have not even that miserable tie on him which we had on the King of Prussia. When the emperor ceases to perform his treaty we cannot stop our payments because the emperor says, "Give me it all at once." Our money, therefore, is absolutely necessary to enable him to stir in the first instance; and if, either from want of ability or any other circumstance, he should fail to perform his treaty, it is obvious that the money we advance him must be irrecoverably lost. And further, if so large a sum is necessary to enable his imperial majesty to act in the present campaign, will not an equal or a larger sum be wanted for the next campaign if the war should continue? And therefore gentlemen must clearly see that the whole of the burden of the war will fall on this devoted country. When Great Britain entered upon this war she was promised the assistance of all Europe; and in less than twenty-four months the whole burden of the war has devolved upon Great Britain!

But it is said we have other allies. We have allies in Italy and Spain. But alas! although we pay great subsidies to the Italian princes, we have scarcely heard of a movement in that quarter. Indeed, to consult the *London Gazette* for 1794, we might suppose Spain and Italy to be neutral powers, as no notice is taken of their military operations during that period. With respect to the King of Sardinia, our first ally in Italy, whatever gentlemen may have thought at different periods of this war, it is possible if he had enjoyed a real and *bona fide* neutrality it would have been much more beneficial to this country than any diversion which he has been able to make. With regard to the diversions attempted in the south of France, what advantage the cause of the allies has reaped there from diversions I am at a loss to discover, and I believe this House has yet to learn.

But we have another ally, the King of Spain. Now what is

the real state of Spain? It is of importance that we should turn our view to the present situation of that country. A great part of its north-eastern provinces has already been conquered by France: Bilbao and Barcelona are in a considerable degree of danger. Are we to look, then, to the Spanish monarchy as being possessed of force sufficient to act against France with effect? Or is it not that part of the alliance which is the most weak, and on which it is probable the French will soon make an impression that will decide the fate of the war in that kingdom? I was told there was such a store of vigour in that country that the people would rise in a mass against France. But when that came to the trial there was nothing which apparently so much contributed to the failure as the individual treachery of the officers of the King of Spain; in no quarter was there so much cause for jealousy or of a want of disposition to resist the French. It may be asked, Was Figueras taken by the French or did it not surrender? It is extremely probable that French intrigue upon this occasion operated more than French force. It was also imagined that the bigoted attachment of the Spaniards to the Roman Catholic religion would inspire them with vigour against the French, who are supposed to have trampled upon all religion. But was this the case? We know the reverse to be the fact.

But what is the state of Spain in other respects? Of all parts of Spain there is none in which there is so much vigour as in Catalonia, into the heart of which the French have penetrated. What was the history of that people? When the French by their arms had made a considerable advance into this province the people of Barcelona determined to resist their progress and to undertake their own defence. Accordingly they sent a deputation to that effect to Madrid, stating that they wished to undertake the defence of the country and that they would defend it to the last drop of their blood, provided no Spanish troops were sent to their assistance except some particular regiments which they specified, and provided an assembly of the state was called. This deputation received no answer; or rather, they received a direct refusal; and the French found but too easy a conquest in that province. I mention this to show that Spain is not a country to be depended upon, and that she is one of the weakest of our allies. The King of Sardinia and the King of Spain were to have made different diversions in aid of the confederacy. The King of Sardinia undertook to make a diversion in Dauphiny, and at this moment the French are masters of Nice and Savoy. Spain engaged to make a diversion in Roussillon, and the French are

now in possession of Navarre, Biscay and Catalonia. All these allies, therefore, upon whose exertions so much dependence was placed by the ministers of this country, are now so many dead weights upon our treasury.

Are the Spaniards in a much better situation in regard to their finances? It is true they have not yet called upon this country for a subsidy; but they must either soon make that application or, what will be much more beneficial for themselves, make a separate peace with France. They have had recourse to measures of finance of a very extraordinary nature. I shall name one of them. Gentlemen will recollect that an honourable friend of mine not long ago made a motion in this House for laying a moderate tax on all offices and employments under government during the war. The House will recollect with what ridicule that motion was received. It was considered as a paltry resource to which no nation that was not utterly exhausted in its finances ought to resort. But what has the King of Spain done? The Spanish court has laid a duty of four per cent. upon every person enjoying any office in Spain above one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and a tax of twenty-five per cent. upon the salaries of all the councillors of state for the support of the present war. I am not commending this expedient. I am only stating it to show what the situation of Spain is with respect to her finances, and how little the allies can rely on that country for support in the prosecution of the war.

Such, Sir, is the real situation of our allies according to the best information I have been able to procure. And is not this an additional argument for going into an inquiry into the state of the nation in order to ascertain distinctly the precise dependence we ought to have on the exertions of our allies? I shall next proceed to the consideration of our own conduct, and to examine what strength we have derived from the estimation which rectitude and dignity, moderation and justice have procured us in the eyes of Europe. I am one of those who firmly believe that the greatest resource a nation can possess, the surest source of power, is a strict attention to the principles of justice. I firmly believe that the common proverb, of honesty being the best policy, is as applicable to nations as to individuals; that this, which the conviction of mankind has made an axiom, is universally true; and that cases which may sometimes be supposed exceptions arise from our taking narrow views of the subject and being unable at once to comprehend the whole. If, therefore, we have been deficient in justice towards other states, we have

been deficient in wisdom and have enfeebled our arm in our efforts against the enemy. Justice is fairly to be ranked among the number of our resources; and it is the duty of the House to inquire whether or not our conduct since the commencement of the war has been such as to entitle us to the good opinion of the wise and observing part of mankind. I am not now going to discuss the justice of entering into the war; but I wish to call the attention of the House to the conduct of the king's ministers in prosecuting it. For whatever may have been the motives which induced ministers to enter upon it, the means they have employed in carrying it on are fit subjects for examination in this House. When we entered upon this war we were sanguine enough to suppose that all the civilised part of the world would see it with the same eyes as we did. When I represented in this House that the plan of starving France adopted by ministers was absurd and impracticable, for that France would receive supplies from neutral nations; when I stated the means by which neutral nations might supply France, I was answered that in this war the neutral nations would be very few, if any. But what is the case at the end of two years? The neutral nations are many and increasing; and that the great neutral nation, America, has continued neutral from the beginning. It is of infinite importance to a nation that respects its honour—that even respects its interest, which is inseparable from its honour—to gain the good opinion of surrounding nations for justice, magnanimity and moderation. Has Great Britain done this, or the reverse? What has been your conduct to Sweden, to Denmark, to Genoa, to Tuscany, to Switzerland—to America while you durst? I do not speak of any particular minister at foreign courts: for many of those ministers I feel great respect, and with some of them I am connected by friendship. I am ready to admit that if they acted contrary to their instructions, ministers at home are not responsible for their conduct; but I am persuaded that they did act according to their instructions; for if they did not, ministers here were bound to recall them and disavow what they had done.

With respect to America I shall say nothing at present except that, after giving orders for taking her ships, we recalled those orders and have since entered into a treaty by which we agree, properly I believe, justly, and if justly wisely, to pay for the rashness and folly of issuing them. Next, with regard to Denmark and Sweden, which were in this case so intimately connected in point of interest that whatever was addressed to the



one might be considered in fact, although not in form, as addressed to the other. To the court of Copenhagen we presented memorial after memorial, couched in the most peevish and offensive terms of remonstrance, on the neutrality of his Danish majesty. These memorials were answered by the minister, M. Bernstoff, with such temper, firmness and diplomatic knowledge as obliged us at length to desist and raised his character higher than that of any Danish minister ever was before. We engaged in a diplomatic contest upon the subject of neutrality, in which we showed our complete ignorance of the right of neutral nations, and were foiled accordingly.

What has been our conduct towards the Grand Duke of Tuscany, a prince who, although belonging to one of the most illustrious families of Europe, is known not to be possessed of any great military power? Lord Hervey goes to the Grand Duke of Tuscany—not to the emperor, the King of Prussia, or any potent monarch—and says to him, “Can you pretend to maintain neutrality with such a government as that of France?”—calling the French government all the hard names which “regular governments” think themselves authorised to bestow upon it; and not recollecting that one of the heaviest accusations against the French was their having presumed to intermeddle in the internal politics of other nations—“Can you basely refuse joining the league against the murderers of your aunt, the declared enemies of your whole family, and the avowed subverters of all established government, order and religion? I know to what cause your hesitation is owing. It is because you give credit to bad ministers; it is because you lend too favourable an ear to the advice of your minister Manfredini, a man who has gained a pernicious ascendancy over your mind, but who ought no longer to have any share in your councils.” Lord Hervey, after thus telling an independent prince that he was not to listen to the advice of his own ministers, might with equal propriety have gone on to tell him that he ought to be guided solely by the counsels of the right honourable gentleman over against me. “Your ministers,” he might have said, “are ignorant and incapable; the British ministers are wise and able. Observe into what a situation they have brought their own country, and you cannot doubt with what wisdom and vigour they will consult for yours.” This language of Lord Hervey has never been disavowed by ministers. It has even been imitated by his successor, and therefore I must consider it as having been the language of his instructions. And thus by menace and insult

was the Grand Duke of Tuscany compelled to renounce his system of neutrality contrary to his own inclination, to the advice of his ministers and the interests of his people. Such was the conduct of ministers when we were powerful in the Mediterranean. Lord Hervey was at length recalled, and another gentleman whom I personally respect was appointed in his stead and instructed to follow the same course. At last, after we lose our power in the Mediterranean—when events turn out against us—we submit, not only to the neutrality of the Duke of Tuscany, but to his concluding a treaty of peace and amity with the French republic!

In Switzerland Lord Robert Fitzgerald, for whose character I have too high a respect to suppose that he would exceed the letter of his instructions in the name of the King of Great Britain, tells the independent Swiss cantons, in the language of insult and injustice, "That he will not decide whether justice and their true interest permit them to remain neutral against those who would again reduce them to barbarism, in a war of almost all the powers of Europe, in a war where not only the existence of every established government but even that of all kind of property is at stake. He will only observe that neutrality itself will not authorise any correspondence, directly or indirectly, with the factious or their agents." He tells them, in effect, that although they may call themselves neutral, they are not to allow their subjects to reap the benefits of that neutrality by intercourse with France. Who made you the arbiters how far intercourse ought to be allowed by independent states between their respective subjects? Where did you get the right? Or, if you have the right, where is your power to enforce it? The Swiss cantons return a civil and dignified answer, "That a rigid and exact neutrality was the invariable maxim of their ancestors; and having received it as a sacred inheritance, they conceive it their duty to abide by it. That they trust his Britannic majesty, following the example of his illustrious ancestors, will respect the independence of the Helvetic confederacy." In the meantime they carry on their intercourse with France in as high a degree as it is their interest to do, regardless of our menaces; and we have now the mortification to feel that the coarseness of our insult was equalled only by its impotence. We have nothing to boast of but the rashness of our design and the meanness of the attempt to carry it into execution.

What has been our conduct towards Genoa? Ministers hold the same language towards that state, and tell them, "If you

continue in your neutrality it must be offensive to the combined powers, and may give occasion to revive claims which must lead to disagreeable consequences":—a meaner threat never was employed. Who are the parties in this mighty contest? Great Britain, taking upon herself to dictate for all the combined powers, and the republic of Genoa—this country not only admonishes the republic of Genoa against observing a neutrality, but threatens her with war if she does. Look at this and see a picture of insolence, injustice and meanness exceeded only by the feebleness of the attempt to follow it up! The fortune of war being against us, even the little republic of Genoa is stout; and after blockading her port we are content to withdraw our ships and forced to submit to her neutrality with an ungracious apology for the injustice we have done. By such conduct we have impaired the character of the nation for justice and magnanimity, and given to Great Britain a character of meanness and insolence which was never before imputed to her, a character which has destroyed more countries than the loss of armies. To put this in a stronger point of view, let us contrast it with our conduct to America. Did we tell America that all intercourse with France was disgraceful until France should restore her king? No! it is only to the weak and defenceless that we talk big: to the great and powerful we apologise, and agree to pay for all the injustice we have done them. If any one principle in the law of nations be clearer and more generally acknowledged than another, it is that of a right in every nation, which no treaty obliges to the contrary, to preserve a complete neutrality. Let gentlemen consider the sacredness of this right and the miserable condition of every weak country if, whenever great powers go to war for what they may call the cause of justice, order, religion and regular government, but what others may think views of ambition and aggrandisement, every weak prince, every petty republic, were to be compelled to take a part in the contest. If such were to be the condition of society; if men were not allowed to enjoy that neutrality which their independence entitles them to, they would begin to doubt the benefits of society and listen to the paradoxes of those who maintain that all established rules and principles are the bane of society.

If the House shall agree to go into the committee, it is my intention to move for the correspondence between his majesty's ministers and their agents at foreign courts; not for the purpose of punishment, but to vindicate their and the national honour. If it should turn out, as I believe it will, that our ambassadors

have acted consistently with the letter and spirit of their instructions; that they have only used the words and sentiments of the cabinet of Great Britain; then it will become this House to show that ministers are not the nation, and that whatever may be their principles, the principles of the nation are justice and magnanimity. It will then become us to show to all Europe that we would rather hold high language to the strong and powerful than to the weak and defenceless; that instead of insulting and injuring the weaker states of Europe, our inclination is to protect them against the greatest and most powerful.

I shall now, Sir, without considering whether this war was justly or unjustly undertaken, proceed to examine with what wisdom and upon what principles it has been conducted. I shall pass by all the considerations that ought to have preceded our determination to go to war, great and important as in my mind they were, and suppose war actually resolved upon. When we had come to this resolution, was it not, I ask, of the utmost consequence to our success that the object of it should be clear? No two things can be more distinct from each other than fighting for a country and fighting against it. If ministers had acted up to the character of statesmen they would have taken one or other side of the alternative with all its advantages and disadvantages. They would have said, "We are going to war with France, not on account of her form of government; we care not what form of government is established in France. It is of no consequence to us whether that country be governed by a monarch, a convention, or a Jacobin club—this is no cause of war. But we go to war against France to protect our allies the Dutch and to avenge the insults she has offered to the British nation"; or they might have taken a different course and have adopted the idea of a right honourable gentleman, not now a member of this House (Mr. Burke), of whose great genius and distinguished character, although I have lately had the misfortune to differ from him in opinion, I shall never speak but in terms of the highest respect and admiration. They might have taken the course pointed out by that right honourable gentleman who, by rather an odd figure, said, "We are not fighting for the Scheldt; we are fighting for the destruction of the greatest evil that ever threatened the civilised world, the French revolution; we are fighting for the restoration of monarchy in France; we are fighting for the re-establishment of regular government; to restore the emigrants to their property: we are fighting for the French nation against the French convention: we are

fighting for our constitution, our monarchy, our laws, our religion, our property; for unless monarchy be restored in France, monarchy will not be safe in other parts of the world, his majesty will not be safe upon his throne; unless their property be restored to the emigrants, the property of every man in this country is insecure." When his majesty's ministers determined on the prosecution of this war they should have made choice of one or other of the alternatives, each of which would have had its inconvenience. If they had chosen the former and said, "In going to war with France we wish to have nothing to do with the nature of her government—we are totally indifferent about her internal situation, and only fight to compel her to make atonement for insults offered to us"—it would have been attended with this inconvenience: we should have had no pretence for expecting the assistance of any French emigrants, or of insurgents in any part of France, except in as far as by resisting the convention and endeavouring to promote their own views they might, without intending it, facilitate the accomplishment of yours. We should have had no claim upon the inhabitants of La Vendée, Brittany, Lyons, Marseilles or any other place where hatred of the convention provoked insurrection; because neither with them nor with the French emigrants should we have had common cause. We should have had no right to look for the co-operation of those powers whose object was the restoration of Louis XVII. to the throne of his ancestors. But on the other hand we should have had what, in my opinion, would have fully compensated all these disadvantages: we should have quarrelled with France on equal terms and fought with her upon known principles. France could not then have made the efforts she has made. If we had set out with declaring that we wished to have no concern with her internal affairs, I ask, would it have been possible for France, in consequence of enthusiasm or terror or of both combined, to have raised and supported those immense armies whose exertions have astonished Europe? Would terror have compelled such exertions and such sacrifices when the people of France knew that they were only fighting for the Scheldt, or for a fortress on their frontier or an island in the West Indies? Is it probable, if such had been the object of the war, that we should have had raised up against us what has been emphatically called, and emphatically felt, an armed nation? Would the convention have been able to persuade them that they were fighting for their liberties, their lives, and for everything that is dear to the heart of man; that they had

no choice but victory or death, if they had been clearly and distinctly told by us that the whole contest was about the navigation of the Scheldt and the security of Holland? But when the whole people of France, in consequence of the declarations of Great Britain, were convinced that their very existence as an independent nation was attacked, then they began to rouse themselves; then they began to unite in defence of what they conceived to be their just rights and liberties; and under the influence of this conviction it was that those effects were produced which have astonished the world and are unparalleled in the history of nations. If, on the other hand, the aid of the French emigrants and insurgents in France had been thought an advantage superior to all this, we should have taken the other part of the alternative and said, "Our object in going to war is to establish a regular form of government in France." The inconvenience here would have been that from the very moment of making this declaration we should have had united against us every republican in France in that vigorous way in which we now see them united. We should have persuaded them, as we have done, that they had no other chance for liberty than by uniting as an armed nation with activity and vigour. If we had said at the outset, "We wish not to dismember France; we wish not to partition her territory; we wish not to weaken or diminish her power, or to aggrandise Great Britain at her expense; our sole object is to restore to her the blessings of a regular government, and to good citizens the enjoyment of their rights and property"; in that case we should have had this advantage—every emigrant from France in every part of the world would have felt in common with the British cause. Every French loyalist would have gone hand and heart with the British nation; even such republicans as disliked the system of terror more than they disliked monarchy would have exerted themselves in our favour. We should then have had a fair opportunity of trying what were the sentiments of the people of France with respect to the revolution, and whether a majority of the nation wished for a monarchy or a republic. We should have reared a standard to which Frenchmen who loved their country might have repaired. Now, by indulging the childish hope of grasping the advantages of each side of the alternative, we have gained neither. How could it be otherwise? When we took Valenciennes, instead of taking it for Louis XVII. we took possession of it in the name of the Emperor Francis. When Condé surrendered we did the same thing. When Mentz sur-

rendered the garrison was dismissed to be employed against the royalists of La Vendée. Was it possible for any man to be so ignorant as to doubt what our intentions were? How, then, was it possible for us to suppose that our conduct would produce on the inhabitants of France an effect different from what it has done? When Sir Charles Grey and Sir John Jervis took Martinique, Guadaloupe, and the rest of the French West India islands, did they take possession of them for Louis XVII.? No! but for the King of Great Britain, not to be restored to France when monarchy and regular government should be restored, but to be retained as conquests if the chance of war should leave them in our hands.

While such was our conduct in all parts of the world could it be hoped that any French emigrant, whose situation was not desperate indeed, would join us; or that all who were lovers of their country more than lovers of royalty would not be our enemies? To attend to justice is, in all cases, peculiarly important; and the love of country is a motive so powerful as to be often used as a pretext even by those who do not feel it. The royalists of La Vendée, of Brittany and other places took the field and held out long and bravely; but what could they say to the people of France—what could they put in their manifestoes of equal weight with the addresses from the convention? They might say, “If we conquer, the French monarchy will be restored; but it will be restored with the territory of France curtailed and diminished, one-third of it, perhaps, divided among rival powers.” The convention could say, “If we conquer, France will remain entire, a great and independent nation, triumphant over all the powers who have confederated against her liberties.” With such discouragements on the one hand, and such flattering prospects on the other, was it to be expected that any considerable number of Frenchmen would connect their own cause with that of the allies? We have so shuffled and trimmed in our professions, and been guilty of such duplicity, that no description of Frenchmen will flock to our standard.

It was a fatal error that we did not, in the commencement of the war, state clearly how far we meant to enter into the cause of the French emigrants; and how far to connect ourselves with powers who, from their previous conduct, might well be suspected of other views than that of restoring monarchy in France. It will be said that we could not be certain in the first instance how far it might be proper to interfere in the internal affairs of

France; that we must watch events and act accordingly. By this want of clearness with respect to our ultimate intentions we have lost more than any contingency could ever promise. All obscurity ought to have been removed and we ought to have distinctly adopted one or other side of the alternative. Every place was not taken for the allies. It was understood by those who surrendered Toulon to Lord Hood that he accepted it on this condition—that he was to adhere to the constitution of 1789. Whether ministers intended to observe that condition I know not; but in their subsequent publications they gave reason to hope that they did. In their declarations they offered peace and protection to all well-disposed Frenchmen who should join in restoring monarchy, without specifying what kind of monarchy. Have they fulfilled that promise? What kind of protection have they afforded to those who endeavoured to restore monarchy? Have not the royalists, for want of assistance or encouragement, been obliged, however reluctantly, to submit to the laws of the republic? If the allies had been fighting either for France or against France, what should have been their conduct towards La Fayette and Dumourier? The seizure of La Fayette by the Austrians was contrary to the law of nations; and their treatment of him must condemn their name to eternal infamy. They found him and the companions of his misfortune not at the head of an army nor in arms, and took them against all the laws of nations and of war—not to be treated as prisoners of war, but as prisoners to be consigned to a dungeon. If the allies were fighting against France, surely they ought not to have treated as criminals generals coming over to them from the enemy. Dumourier came over when he thought he had great power with his army. That power turned out to be much less than he had imagined; but it was impossible that a man who had served his country with so much reputation, with so much ability and success, should not have had a considerable party in it. How was he treated? When they found that he could not bring along with him so great a portion of his army as they expected, after having extolled his virtue at the moment when he had rendered his virtue at least doubtful, they drove him from them a wandering fugitive, as if they had passed a decree expressly forbidding any French general to abandon the standard of the republic in future. By acting in this manner, as is well expressed in a French pamphlet I have recently read, “we are more unaccountable in our political conduct than any of the most bigoted religious sects, for we even exclude converts”; which I believe



was never done by any sectarists. Our conduct, therefore, in this respect is perfectly new; for after Dumourier becomes a convert to, and espouses the cause of, the allies, they refuse to receive him. But if we and our allies were fighting for France against the convention, we ought to have praised this general as a convert, we ought to have received him with cordiality and held him up as an example for the conversion of others. If we were fighting against France we should have considered all Frenchmen as enemies in the common acceptation of the term, and not by denouncing vengeance for crimes committed in France, as was done by Lord Auckland in a paper published at the Hague, have given ground for that enthusiasm of resistance which inflames the minds of men who conceive their lives to be attacked—an enthusiasm which has united for common defence those who in every moment of respite were tearing one another to pieces and sending their opponents to the scaffold whenever they could supplant them in power. If the allies were fighting for France, the restoration of monarchy and regular government, I mean not to say that they should have granted impunity to those who were more immediately the cause of the murder of the king; but they ought not to have begun with thundering forth a manifesto threatening Paris with military execution and even total destruction; denouncing vengeance which necessarily alarmed all men, as no man was named; a manifesto which we cannot even now endure to read but by contrasting the pride and cruelty of the menace with the impotence of the attempt to put it in execution. If we were fighting for France, we ought to have assured the people of France that we had no views of aggrandisement, much less of dismembering the kingdom, or taking vengeance of the inhabitants. We ought to have convinced them that we entered France, not to conquer, but to restore; and the very first step should have been to publish a general amnesty with some exceptions. A whole nation may be misled, but cannot be all guilty. As has been said by the great man already mentioned, “I know not how to draw an indictment against a whole nation.” Some exceptions to the general amnesty might have been necessary; but these should have been mentioned by name that others might have had nothing to fear. By this mode of proceeding many persons deserving of punishment might have escaped; but this would not have been so bad as terrifying all the people of France by indiscriminate threats. This I conceive to be a fundamental error. I would therefore have the House go into an inquiry that we may declare this error to

be fundamental, if so it shall appear to be; that we may take some intelligible ground for our future conduct; define clearly and distinctly the object of the war, and put the remaining quarrel with France upon such a footing as to show whether we are really fighting for France as a nation or against her. Is there a man who believes that to define our object and to demand it of the French government, even at the price of recognising that government (as far as to negotiate is a recognition), would render it more difficult to be obtained by force of arms if the French should refuse to grant it? Does the right honourable gentleman himself believe that if the convention were to refuse reasonable terms of peace they would be able to call forth such extraordinary exertions on the part of the people for continuing the war as the general persuasion of the people that they have no alternative but conquest or subjugation has hitherto enabled them to call forth?

Having mentioned these great and fundamental errors, it is hardly necessary to enter into those that are more minute. It is almost sufficient to name them. If we took possession of Toulon, not with a view to conquest, but with the intention of supporting the cause of monarchy in France, it was the most important advantage we could have obtained, and to the preservation and improvement of which all our attention ought to have been directed. Yet we left Toulon with a very small English force, trusting its defence to the aid of allies who were either unable or unwilling to defend it. This was said to be done for the sake of an expedition against the French West India islands, an expedition of much less importance than the defence of Toulon; and that expedition was again crippled by collecting troops under the Earl of Moira for a descent upon the coast of France—a descent for which an opportunity has never yet been found; and therefore government has never been able in any way to avail itself of the force so collected. In consequence of this Toulon was lost; and a number of troops were sent to the West Indies, sufficient indeed, through the zeal and ability of the commanders, to take the islands, but not sufficient to keep them. Guadaloupe, we know, is gone; there is little hope of our being now in possession of any part of St. Domingo; and we are far from being without well-grounded apprehensions for the safety of Martinique and the other conquered islands.

With respect to the last campaign, our great and leading error was confidence in the King of Prussia, in the Belgians and in the Dutch. We told the people of the Austrian Netherlands that we

were fighting for their religion, and the people of the United Provinces that we were fighting for their liberties; but they did not believe us. We drew the Dutch into a war which they had no inclination to undertake. So early as the beginning of the year 1793 I stated it as my opinion that the Dutch would not demand our assistance. I was answered that they durst not demand it, but that this was no reason for our withholding it, and that if it was offered they would not refuse it. I replied that I believed the case to be exactly the reverse, and that if we offered our assistance, although the Dutch did not desire it, yet they durst not refuse it. I also find, at an early period of the war, the people of Friezeland putting up their prayers to Almighty God to deliver them from this war into which they had been plunged by their allies. All that has happened since has confirmed my opinion. While we were fighting in the Austrian Netherlands the Dutch gave us but feeble and reluctant aid. When we were driven out of the Austrian Netherlands, and the United Provinces were to be defended, the Dutch, instead of rising in a mass to defend them, joined in welcoming the French. We ought to have known beforehand that the people of the United Provinces wished not to be defended by us, and therefore were not to be confided in as allies. We ought to have adopted one of two courses; we should either have withdrawn our mischievous and oppressive protection and said to the Dutch, "Defend yourselves"; or we should have taken possession of the country with an army and defended it like a conquered province.

When I look to the naval part of the campaign I find that the captures made by the enemy were greater than they ever were known to be in any former war; but I do not find that our trade has increased in the same proportion. By documents, which I conceive to be tolerably correct, it appears that in the second year after France joined in the American war the number of ships captured by France, Spain and America was 499. How many of these were taken by Spain I do not know; but it is probable that nearly one-half of them were taken by the Americans. In the second year of this war, when we have France alone to contend with, the number of ships belonging to Great Britain which have been captured by France amounts to 860. Until I hear this extraordinary difference, under circumstances so much less unfavourable than those of the period to which I have alluded, accounted for, I must conclude that there has been a great defect in the naval administration of this country; either that we have not had a sufficient naval force, or that ministers

have not well applied it. His majesty's speech from the throne in January 1794 laid the ground of most forcible arguments for inquiry. That speech, in recapitulating the advantages obtained by the arms of the allied powers as the pledge and earnest of still greater advantages, almost expressly assured us of the empire of the sea. Oh, the little foresight of presumptuous man! Oh, the fallacy of human hope! Every pledge of success, every topic of consolation held out to us in that speech is now converted into a circumstance of defeat, into an argument for despair! "The United Provinces," we were told, "have been protected from invasion: the Austrian Netherlands have been recovered and maintained, places of considerable importance have been acquired on the frontiers of France; an important and decisive blow has been given to their naval power; at sea our superiority has been undisputed and our commerce so effectually protected that the losses sustained have been inconsiderable in proportion to its extent and to the captures made on the contracted trade of the enemy." Yet in the course of a year ushered in with so much promise our superiority at sea has been disputed; after a second more important and decisive blow given to the enemy's naval power they have been masters of the sea for two months, and 860 of our ships have been taken! Every hope and expectation held out by that speech is now completely gone. We have lost the fortresses on the French frontier. We have lost the Austrian Netherlands. We have lost Holland; and the trade of England has been greatly injured. It is not the change of one man; it is not the change of the first lord of the admiralty that will afford satisfaction for the injury sustained by our commerce. I observe likewise that since the commencement of the war the recaptures do not bear a greater proportion to the ships taken than they did in the American war, when Great Britain had so many different nations against her. Are these, or are they not, good grounds for inquiry? For what purpose do gentlemen think they were sent to this House? Do they believe they were sent here for the sole purpose of voting taxes, as was too often the case with the parliaments of the ancient kings of this country? Or as a national council to see that the executive government is not only incorrupt but judicious? It might have been supposed that after the memorable first of June we should be masters of the sea; but we have no reason to boast of the manner in which we have improved that victory. Our fleet came into port in November and the French fleet put to sea; no doubt because ours was returned. So little foresight or exertion

was displayed in preparing our fleet for sea again that it could not go out till late in January; and thus for two months the French were masters of the sea, and our fleets of merchantmen, and even troops embarked for important foreign services, were blocked up in our ports. I shall, perhaps, be told that our fleet cannot be always out. I say that under proper management a great part of it always might be out. But will any man contend that it might not have been ready in less than two months, during great part of which time it was known that the French fleet was out? There was even a rumour that after the ships were ready for sea they were detained for want of biscuit and other provisions, which it became necessary to send by land carriage. How true these reports may be I know not; but they have been generally circulated and believed, which is a sufficient reason why the House should inquire. Every one of the circumstances I have mentioned calls aloud for inquiry, unless the members of this House are prepared to say that the present situation of the country is so happy and so prosperous as to be *prima facie* evidence of the diligence and ability of his majesty's ministers; that they have steered us so steadily and piloted us so wisely that we ought to repose implicit confidence in them without inquiry. Can ministers themselves state any ground why this House ought to repose in them any confidence whatever, much less such extraordinary confidence as this? Will they say that their administration of the war has been successful, or that the state of the country is prosperous? I am not, I hope, a man to give to success more credit than is due to it. I hope I can reverence unsuccessful wisdom; my own experience has not been such as to lead me to think that success should be considered as the criterion of wisdom. Let the minister say that the hand of God is upon us when human prudence can avail us nothing; but let him not say that Great Britain is declining in every quarter; that all her exertions and the most lavish profusion of treasure and of blood avail her nothing; and yet deny the propriety of an inquiry by the House of Commons to discover, if possible, the source of so melancholy a reverse of fortune. In such a case it is the duty of every member of this House, of the friends of ministers themselves, to give up their private confidence and promote inquiry. Then, if they find that ministers have been pursuing an impracticable object, or endeavouring to obtain it by inadequate means, they will know how to apply the remedy. If they find that ministers have been conducting the affairs of the state with ability and wisdom, they will be able to say with

satisfaction to themselves and their constituents, "We will continue our confidence in these ministers."

Sir, exhausted as I feel myself, and long as I have already trespassed on the patience of the House, I must pass over in silence many points which are nearly connected with the general statement, and which would call powerfully on this House to enter into an inquiry on the state of the nation. But although I conceive I have already stated sufficient grounds for going into such an inquiry on all the questions more immediately connected with the war, there is yet one subject so closely connected with the prosecution of it in one point of view that before I sit down I must beg leave to make a few observations upon it—I mean the present situation of the sister kingdom. The House will do me the honour to recollect that, much against the inclination of my most intimate friends, I formerly harassed this House with a variety of questions which they were unwilling to debate. I persevered obstinately, however, not because I had any satisfaction in doing so when the House was not disposed to listen to me, but because I thought that at the outset of the war it was my bounden duty to lay before this House those circumstances which, as appeared to me, ought to have discouraged us from entering upon it. I felt no pleasure in addressing these arguments to unwilling ears, for I am not desirous of imitating the example of Cardanus, an author now but little read, who says, "*Nunquam libentius loquor quam cum quod loquor auditoribus displicet.*" I persevered because I thought it my duty to persevere; and among other things I stated, as discouragements for going on with the war, that the Austrian Netherlands could not be retained while the subjects of his imperial majesty were disaffected to his government; that Holland could not be defended while the Dutch did not wish to defend it; and that the King of Prussia had proved by his conduct in the first campaign that Great Britain and her allies ought not to depend upon him. I was then told that my speech was a libel upon all our actual and all our possible allies. But, Sir, if it was a libel, experience has proved that it had in it that which has been held the strongest ingredient of libel, truth; and as such I hope that speech will go down to posterity a convicted libel. I then also touched upon some dangers which I apprehended with respect to Ireland. I was told, "Touch not upon Ireland, that is a subject too delicate for discussion in this House. This House," it was said, "has nothing to do with Ireland, Ireland has a parliament of her own and will take care of herself." To that I then answered

as I do now; that when a British House of Commons is advising the king upon a matter of so much importance as peace or war, they ought to extend their consideration to all the material parts of the empire; and surely it is unnecessary to state that Ireland is a most important part of his majesty's dominions, as furnishing great resources of men for the army and the navy in time of war. Without the assistance of Ireland we can never be secure in peace nor successful in war. The identity of her constitution, and her being under the same executive government, make Ireland a constant object of attention, from which we may derive information with regard to the disposition of the king's ministers, to which we may look for examples to be imitated or errors to be avoided. I saw formerly certain prejudices in that country which would throw much difficulty in the way of the Roman Catholics getting all they asked, and all that justice required they should have, as subjects of the same constitution, viz. equality of rights with every other subject. There had sprung up in that country a strange jargon of what is called a Protestant ascendancy, as if such a thing as a religious ascendancy ought to take place in politics. Ministers some time ago got over the difficulty in part and, although not in a way calculated to gain much respect, conciliated the affections of the Catholics for the time. This, however, was not the only subject of complaint. There were other abuses in Ireland of which the people bitterly complained; and when the coalition took place in July last, however much I might lament that event, I certainly did think it might produce this good effect, that the corrupt administration of Ireland would be radically reformed, and that possibly as much might be gained to liberty there as seemed to be lost to it here. And this was in fact near being the case, when unhappily things took a different turn.

Without entering into the question who is to blame, I ask whether Ireland is not at present in a state of irritation? whether she is not in a state of danger? And if she is in such a situation as to give just cause of alarm to every friend of the country, whether this state has not been occasioned solely by his majesty's ministers? Some may say it is owing to the ministers here; others to the ministers there; but I defy any man to say that the present state of that country is not owing to the improper conduct of the king's ministers. No matter whether to the right honourable gentleman the Duke of Portland or Earl Fitzwilliam; although I have no doubt as to which of them it is not owing. Earl Fitzwilliam is sent over as lord-

lieutenant to Ireland, justly popular from his personal character, and more so from his connection with a part of the ministry here supposed to be favourable to the wishes and claims of Ireland. He arrives: he consults with men to whom the people of Ireland have been long accustomed to look up with confidence;—he is adored—he is idolised to such a degree that the people of Ireland join with him in the absurd cry of war—nothing but Earl Fitzwilliam's popularity could have induced them to join in that cry—he states from the throne the general wishes of his majesty for carrying on the war; that it is intended to give emancipation to the Catholics. [Mr. Pitt intimated across the table that it was not so.] It was so understood or, if you please, it was so misunderstood in the Irish parliament. They are told that abuses are to be reformed; they see the most respected men in the country daily rising up in the House of Commons to propose the reform of abuses; they see those measures attended with fewer dismissals from office undoubtedly than the people could have wished, but with the dismissal of several persons known to be connected with the old abuses. They consider all this as the omen of approaching liberty; and that the people of Ireland, without distinction, are about to enjoy those rights and privileges which they ought always to have enjoyed. All this passes in the face of the world without the least opposition on the part of the cabinet of Great Britain. What follows? Great supplies are called for by his majesty; and the Irish, in high expectation of the promised reform of abuses, with a degree of imprudence, not adhering to the sober and cautious principle that reform and supply should go hand in hand (for it is the character of that nation to be more generous than prudent), granted the supplies before the promise was fulfilled. Having given all, the cup is dashed from their lips, their eager and excited hopes are blasted, and they are told, "We have got your money; you may now seek for your reform where you can." The ministers here then quarrel with this popular lord-lieutenant, whose personal character did more for the coalition than the characters of all the other ministers united, for it made the administration popular, because from his accession it was supposed to be pure. They give up, however, this popular friend, rather than Ireland should receive from this country the benefits to which she is in common justice entitled, and in the hopes of which she had voted for the service of his majesty such large and liberal supplies.

Sir, I may be told that this lord-lieutenant gave hopes and



promises which he was unauthorised to give. To that I answer that from my knowledge of him I do not believe it. But suppose it were so, what is that to this House? Is it not a matter of total indifference to us where the blame lies? Is not Ireland in danger? No man will deny it; and that is sufficient for my purpose. The blame attaches either on the ministers in Ireland or on the ministers here; and if this House does not institute an inquiry, and explain clearly and satisfactorily to the public who has been the cause of this alarming danger, we may be responsible for the dismemberment of the British empire. It may be supposed that this is one of those questions on which I have strong personal partialities. I admit it. I believe I shall never be able to divest myself of them; and I am perfectly convinced that Earl Fitzwilliam's conduct in this particular instance has been agreeable to the uniform tenor of his whole life. I firmly believe that he has acted fairly and honourably and agreeably to what was understood between him and his colleagues in the British cabinet: this conviction is matter of great private satisfaction to me; but it is no reason why the House should not go into the inquiry.

The Roman Catholics amount to three-fourths of the population of Ireland. But the Catholics are no longer a party. The parties now to be dreaded in Ireland are, on the one hand, a few people holding places of great emolument and supporting corruption and abuses; and on the other, the Irish nation. The Protestants are as much interested in this great business of reform as the Catholics. I no longer apprehend any danger to Ireland from disputes between the Catholics and the Protestants; what I apprehend is the alienation of the whole Irish people from the English government. Many gentlemen who have not taken pains to examine into the subject imagine that the government of Ireland, because consisting of King, Lords and Commons, nearly resembles that of Great Britain. This, however, is by no means the case. I dare say also that some gentlemen know so little of what has passed in Ireland since the year 1793 as to imagine that the Roman Catholics are now nearly on the same footing with the Protestants; and that, since the above period, they have suffered no persecutions or exclusions. If there is any man who thus thinks, he grossly deceives himself. But passing over these circumstances, is it not self-evident that the danger arising from the present state of Ireland has been created by some of the king's ministers? Let the House go into an inquiry and they will see on whom punishment ought to fall. If the ministers in Ireland are guilty, let them be punished: or if his

majesty's ministers here (which is much more probable) have been the cause of this irritation, let punishment fall upon them. If Earl Fitzwilliam, rashly and wantonly running after popularity, has sacrificed the real interests of that country, he deserves the severest censure. But if it shall appear that he has been trifled with and shuffled out of his measures and situation by ministers here in order to serve their own base purposes; if it shall appear that he has acted on the principles of prudence and patriotism, and that his government was founded on principles which tended to preserve the connection between the two countries, what punishment can be too severe for those who have been the authors of such double-dealing?

I am aware that it is a common argument against such motions as this to say, "Your final object is the removal of ministers; why, then, do you not do so at once?" My answer is because I think we ought first to have an inquiry. At the same time I candidly admit my opinion to be that if an inquiry be gone into the result must be the removal of his majesty's present ministers. On what rational ground should this induce any member to oppose inquiry? Does any man who approves of continuing the war hope for better success than we have hitherto experienced while it is conducted with the same weakness and folly? Does any man who wishes for an end to the war hope that his majesty's present ministers can obtain for this country a safe and honourable peace? If, after an inquiry into their past conduct, it shall turn out that they have acted justly and wisely, then let us continue our confidence in them: but if the contrary should appear, as I strongly suspect it will, then it will become the duty of this House to call them to an account, perhaps to punishment. This inquiry, among other advantages attending it, will discover to the nation the true causes of all our late failures and calamities. Wise men choose a wise object and persist in their efforts to obtain it by varying the means as occasion requires, the object being still the same. The conduct of the present administration has been quite the reverse with regard to the war. Day after day, and motion after motion, has varied the object, but they uniformly insist on the same means. Blood, war and treasures are their means, however they may vary their object. They have constantly avoided making a choice between the two branches of the alternative I have stated. They have never decided whether they were making war for France or against France.

The present state of Ireland shows that there is no part of the

British empire in which the strongest traces of the minister's misconduct are not to be found. There are some occasions, one would imagine, upon which ministers must wish to be clearly understood. But men never get the better of their nature; and whenever the right honourable gentleman expresses himself he is differently understood by every man who hears him. It is not from any want of words or choice of expression that the right honourable gentleman does not speak intelligibly. He is misunderstood by the House; he is misunderstood by his own particular friends. He employs the gift of words, not like other men for the sake of being more distinct, but for the purpose of being misunderstood: even his new associates in the cabinet cannot understand him. Of him it may be said, as of a great man of ancient times, "In rebus politicis, nihil simplex, nihil apertum, nihil honestum." If the House should agree to go into the inquiry they will prove that they are really affected by the interests of their constituents. If they should resolve to go on without knowing who are our allies or whether we have any, there will be too much reason for saying that our constitution is gone. In either case I shall derive from having made the motion the satisfaction of showing that there are men in the House who believe the situation of the country to be such as it really is, and are anxious to do everything in their power to avert the consequences so much to be apprehended. Mr. Fox concluded with moving, "That this House will resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider of the state of the nation."

Mr. Fox was ably supported by Mr. Sheridan. Mr. Pitt allowed the subjects proposed for inquiry to be of the highest importance, but said that this was not the season to discuss them. He concluded by moving, "That the House do now adjourn," after strongly admonishing the House to waive all notice of the affairs of Ireland as improper at the present period, and likely to be productive of more perplexity than service to either of the two kingdoms. The adjournment was supported by Mr. Canning and also by Mr. Wilberforce, who thought the discussion of the affairs of Ireland at present might be attended with dangerous consequences.

The question being put, That the House do now adjourn, the House divided:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS	{ Mr. John Smith } { Mr. Canning }	219.—NOES	{ Mr. Sheridan } { Mr. Grey }
			63.

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

## ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION

*October 29, 1795.*

THE king's speech announced that, notwithstanding the many events unfavourable to the common cause, the general situation had materially improved during the course of the year. The anarchy which had so long prevailed in France had led to a crisis which, said the speech, if it should terminate in any order of things compatible with the tranquillity of other countries, signs in France of a disposition to negotiate would be met here with a willingness to treat. In the meantime, however, the war must be prosecuted with vigour.

An address of thanks in answer to the speech was proposed by Lord Dalkeith, and seconded by the honourable Robert Stewart (afterwards Lord Castlereagh). After it had been supported by Mr. Jenkinson, and opposed by Mr. Sheridan and General Tarleton,

Mr. Fox said that after hearing his majesty's speech, as read to them by the Speaker from the chair, and after hearing the arguments which had been advanced for the address which had been moved upon the speech, he should not feel that he did his duty to his constituents and his country if he were to give a silent vote. He had little to add to what his honourable friend (Mr. Sheridan) had said on the surprise which the first insulting paragraph of his majesty's speech must excite in the bosom of every man; and which, in the old times of spirit and energy that distinguished the people of this country, would have drawn upon the ministers who were the authors of it indignation and punishment. He said "insulting paragraph," for it was not enough, it seemed, that they should with impunity persist for three years together in the prosecution of a war for miserable speculations—it was not enough to add one hundred millions of debt to the capital, to load the people with five millions per annum of permanent taxes—it was not enough to grind the poor and unhappy people of this country in such a manner as to make almost every man of them feel the misfortune of scarcity and want, but they must also be insulted by putting into his majesty's mouth, in the very first paragraph of his speech, the impudent falsehood that their situation was "materially improved"! How was their situation improved? In what circumstances

were the affairs of this country bettered since the last year? Were they improved from the recent success of the Austrian army? This success, whatever it might be, and of which he believed ministers had not themselves any very perfect account, was not an improvement in comparison with the last year, but the last week; and surely it could not be called an improvement of our situation, since last year the French were not in possession of a foot of territory beyond the Rhine. That they might now be forced to retreat was possible, and perhaps it was possible that, in comparison with the disasters which were expected from the continuance of their successful career, this retreat might be construed into an improvement; but that it should come from his majesty's ministers, who had prevailed on parliament to guarantee to Austria a loan of four millions and a half, which was to procure positive conquests on the part of Austria, was somewhat curious. They had told parliament that, from the various points of contact between the Austrian dominions and France, the emperor was capable of seriously wounding her if assisted by this country; and upon these representations the House was prevailed upon to become the guarantee of this enormous loan. Now, what was the issue of these representations? Instead of Austria having been able to penetrate into any part of the French dominions, or to wound them in any one point, they were told that it was an improvement of their situation that the French had recently been forced to retreat from posts of which they were not in possession at the time of the guarantee. Was it an improvement in our situation that they had extended their dominion beyond the Rhine; that Mannheim had fallen into their hands, and that the greater part of the palatinate had also been overrun? It was an insult on the understandings of Englishmen to say that in this quarter of the war there was an improvement in our situation. The check given to the French in Italy was also introduced as a matter of triumph; that was because the French had not succeeded in all their extent of operations, and because they were not masters of every part of the countries they had invaded, the situation of Great Britain was improved. Or did ministers mean to insinuate that, in a general comparison of the situation of the two countries, our state was better than last year?

It had been alleged by himself and others, in the course of last session, that there was great reason to apprehend a scarcity of grain in the kingdom, and that it was worthy the consideration of ministers, before they pressed for a continuance of a system

that necessarily increased the consumption, to see that the country was plentifully supplied with the necessaries of life. This observation was treated with the most lofty disdain, and in a tone of insolent and haughty indignation the suggestion was imputed to a factious spirit which sought to raise an unnecessary alarm in the minds of men; and at a later period of the session, when his honourable and respected friend (Mr. Hussey) urged the same forcible persuasive against war upon information as to the quantity of grain in the country, which he had obtained with care, he was rebuked for throwing out the suggestion as being utterly unfounded in fact. But how had the event turned out? That these warnings had been most lamentably verified it was not necessary for him, he believed, now to state; nor would it be alleged that in this particular our internal situation was "materially improved." Improved! Good God, when we were reduced to such a point of misery that, looking into the situation of the common labourer from one end of the country to the other, it was a melancholy and a heart-breaking fact that not one man out of ten was able by his labour to earn sufficient bread for himself and his family! Oh, but it seemed that France was reduced to a situation of "unparalleled distress"! And this was held out to the people of Great Britain as a matter of consolation to them! He would not quarrel about the words "unparalleled distress"; it might be so; but he must animadvert on the strange logic which was used upon the occasion; for the people of this country were to be told that this unparalleled distress of the French was owing entirely to the war; whereas the distresses of England had nothing on earth to do with it! How such a difference could exist in the operation of the war it was not for him to divine—that in France all their scarcity, all their calamities were to be imputed to it, but that in England the war had no effect whatever on our internal situation. If the people of this country had so thoroughly surrendered their understandings to the eloquence of ministers as to believe this kind of logic, he had no more to say; it was impossible to add anything that could expose so gross an absurdity.

The depreciation of assignats was the everlasting burden of all their harangues. "France was utterly undone! France was incapable of all exertion! France was completely exhausted in consequence of the depreciation of her assignats!" This had been the incessant story with which the parliament and people of this country had been deluded from the beginning of the war. Last year they were told that France could not go on, for her

assignats were at a discount of eighty per cent. [Some gentleman said in a whisper that it was not last year, but the year before, that this was said.] Last year, or the year before, said Mr. Fox, it is little matter which; it is hardly possible for any memory to state the precise time of these assertions, they have been so incessantly made, so incessantly repeated, so incessantly held forth to the people of this country as grounds of hope, and have so constantly ended in disappointment, that whether it was last year or the year before, was precisely the same to the argument. When he was told that the assignats were at a discount of eighty per cent. he ceased to think upon the subject: from the moment that they were eighty per cent. discount, it was no longer of consequence to speculate upon them. All theories of mere arithmeticians on the subject were from that instant at an end; when a paper currency was at eighty per cent. discount it would be said, upon the mere calculations of theory, to be tantamount to extinction. But when they looked to experience and practice, when they referred to the example of America, a reflecting statesman would hesitate before he pronounced upon the subject and before he presumed to delude his country by building on such an hypothesis. And accordingly, as if the instance of America had not been sufficient to correct the fallacy of mere calculation on such a subject, France had given another lesson on the point—France, that was reduced to such a state of weakness as, from her deplorable situation, to be held out an easy prey—France who, in the month of June last, was said to be gasping in her last agonies and when, on account of her deplorable situation, it was said to be impolitic for us to give her peace—France has, since the date of her expiring agony, made the most brilliant campaign, he would venture to say, that the history of mankind almost exhibited, in which her arms had everywhere been triumphant, and where, by the mere force of conquest, she had reduced almost every one of her allies to sue for peace and secure their safety by negotiation. Such was the issue of their calculations upon her distress! He was afraid, he said, of such agonies; and surely no man of common sense, after such a result, would again calculate upon success from the depreciation of their paper.

But it was not their paper only which was adduced as a proof of their distress; they were utterly destitute of provisions, it seemed; and as an argument for continuing the war, the House were told that the French government had been obliged to unload the ships at Brest in order to supply Paris with bread. This was said to have been their condition. Be it so. What must be their

feeling of the cause in which they had engaged that under such a pressure of scarcity could rouse them to such exertions? Those who had last year held out this argument of their distress as a ground of hope, and who put into his majesty's speech the memorable expression, "that the internal situation of the enemy should make us indulge a hope that they were hastening to such a state of order and regular government as might be capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other powers," would now explain upon what better grounds they held out the less precise and less intelligible hope of the present speech. They then said that the distresses were likely to produce a return of a state of order and regular government, so as to enable us to treat with them with confidence and security. What do they say now? It was most material to attend to the words which they had put in his majesty's mouth. "The distraction and anarchy which have so long prevailed in that country have led to a crisis." When I heard these words, said Mr. Fox, I took it for granted that we were to be told the exact nature of the crisis, and the good which our ministers were about to extract from it. But mark the words: "have led to a crisis of which it is as yet impossible to foresee the issue." Here is a piece of information for the parliament and people of Great Britain! It goes on, however: "but which must in all human probability produce"—Ay, now we come, I hope, to the desirable point—produce peace I hope—no such thing!—"produce consequences highly important to the interests of Europe!" Good God! Mr. Speaker, is this a proof of the improvement of our situation since last year? Does this hold out to the impoverished, oppressed and starving people of England a nearer prospect of the termination of this unfortunate war? Last year their distress was likely to produce such an order of things as would give us a secure peace; and now all that we are to look for from the distraction and anarchy that reign in France are consequences that may be "important to the interests of Europe"! What period of the eventful history of this wonderful revolution has not been productive of consequences materially important to Europe? Of what change that has taken place might not the same thing be said? When the revolution, as it is called, of the 31st of May took place, might it not have been said that a crisis was approached that might have produced consequences important to the interests of Europe? When Robespierre's tyranny was extinguished, might not the same thing have been said? Upon the insurrections that have hap-



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pened from time to time, and particularly on the late insurrection, in short, on every great event that has arisen in France, the same equivocal words might have been used by his majesty's ministers.

What, then, were the people of England to understand from these words now? What prospect did they hold forth that his majesty's ministers were to seize on the first favourable moment in which they might negotiate beneficially for peace? If they were to argue from their past conduct they surely could draw no favourable conclusion, nor any rational ground of hope, from these unintelligible words. In December 1792, Mr. Fox said, he had made a motion,<sup>1</sup> to which he certainly could not without a degree of egotism recur, because he could not recur to it without pride and satisfaction to himself. He asked whether a negotiation might not have been entered upon at that moment with a greater probability of securing a beneficial peace to England than now? He had sometime in every session since that period renewed, in one way or another, the same motion; and he desired to know whether our perverse continuance in the proud denial of its being the proper moment to negotiate had bettered our condition or opened to us the prospect of a more honourable termination of the war? On the contrary, had we not from year to year entangled ourselves deeper and rendered the practicability of peace upon safe and honourable terms more hopeless? But there was one point of view in which our present situation had been viewed by an honourable gentleman very much connected with ministers and who, he hoped, spoke on the present occasion authoritatively. The honourable gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson) had said that he was now willing to admit that all prospect of restoring the emigrants to their estates and the Bourbon family to the throne of France was hopeless; that it was a matter of prudence to calculate the value of an object together with the chance of procuring it, and not to pursue any object, however desirable, beyond the rational hope of obtaining it. If the disasters of the war had produced this conviction in the minds of his majesty's ministers he, who thought that wisdom was the first of human acquisitions, and that prudence in the governors of a state was not merely a most valuable but a most necessary virtue, would be willing to allow that our situation was improved. It was improved because our ministers were brought at length to a conviction of their error; because they had returned to their senses. But, good God, what a series of calamity and disaster had been required to produce this

<sup>1</sup> See p. 30.

restoration of their reason! What a state of degradation must that House and the country be come to that it should be held out as a matter of exultation and as a proof of our situation being improved, that ministers had been at length corrected, not by the indignation and energy of the people, but by the consequences of their own imbecility and guilt! What a contrast did this exhibit between the present and the ancient state of England, when the power of control which belonged to the vigorous understanding and the manly spirit of Englishmen was extinct, and the people were supinely content to wait until obstinate fury should, by its natural course, correct itself! Oh, miserable England, to what a state are you fallen when such is the wretched consolation in which you indulge!

The expedition to Quiberon, Mr. Fox said, was one of the grand sources by which this conviction was produced in ministers. He knew not by whom that expedition was planned; he knew not in whose desperate bosom the idea of the horrid expedition was engendered, but it was a scene over which the heart of every manly Briton shed tears of blood; and which had done more mischief to the British character, had sunk it lower in the eyes of observant Europe, and would stain it more in the estimation of posterity, than all the rest of the operations of this war, frantic, base and inhuman as many of its projects had been. Good God! to think that so many brave and honourable men, among whom there were gentlemen of the purest feelings and of the most honourable principles, should be led to massacre in the way in which they were! That one of the most gallant among them<sup>1</sup> should be denied the slender consolation which he requested in his expiring moments of having his letter made public was such an act of savage barbarity as would leave an eternal stain upon England, if parliament and the people did not testify their indignation by fixing a strong mark of censure upon its authors. Yet even this lesson—even the dreadful issue of this abominable scheme—did not produce the effect upon the minds of his majesty's ministers which might have been expected; another expedition was framed in which the emigrants were to be employed in a descent upon the coast of France. The second expedition was concerted, perhaps, with somewhat less indiscretion and somewhat less barbarity than the first; but it seemed to have its origin in the same principles, and to owe its birth to the same parent. It was owing only to its utter failure that it had not been equally disastrous; for, if the expedition

<sup>1</sup> The Count de Sombreuil.

to L'Isle Dieu had been carried into effect in the same manner as the first, the unfortunate persons must have been equally abandoned. And yet, though not attended with the same fatal effects as the first, the expedition had been attended with misfortune. Our fleet had been exposed to great risk on a dangerous coast; and even now we must either land the stores upon L'Isle Dieu for the maintenance of the unhappy persons still there, or abandon them to the certain though lingering death of famine or to the more merciful doom of the guillotine.

It was impossible to animadvert upon the conduct of ministers in these expeditions without being astonished at the insanity with which they were planned. It must now be a matter of secret congratulation to themselves that every one of their projects had failed; their success would have made it impossible for them to have maintained the argument which they had held that day. What did they do? They sent an officer to summon Belle Isle in the name of Louis XVIII., the rightful king of France, and thus they made their officer declare a falsehood, a direct falsehood, as great a falsehood as if he were traitor enough to declare that Cardinal York was the rightful king of Great Britain. But what must have been the consequence if, upon this summons, Belle Isle or Noirmoutier had yielded? We must have landed and taken possession of them in the name of Louis XVIII., and the unfortunate prince, just landed in the place under our auspices, would have been identified with our cause, and we should have been pledged to the restoration of this legal monarch in his rights. Could we then have had the blessing which was this day held up of abandoning a course which could no longer be pursued with rational hopes? We should then have been reduced to the melancholy alternative of abandoning the prince and his followers with infamy, or of prosecuting his cause under the most desperate circumstances. Fortunately for ministers, however, their project had failed, and they were thus relieved by the want of success from the folly of their act. It was by this sort of reasoning alone that he could resolve the strange paradox of the seconder of the motion, who had said that the very failure of the war had produced good consequences. If it were applied to our expeditions to the coast of France it perhaps might hold true, as the consequence was a conviction in the breasts of ministers that it was impracticable to pursue the restoration of Louis any more.

Mr. Fox said that it was with pain that he took up the time of the House with any observations upon this kind of reasoning.

He was confident that the natural plain sense and understandings of Englishmen, who had always been distinguished for their love of direct and plain dealing, would soon be disgusted, and reject with indignation and nausea a cause that required such refinement of reasoning to support it. An honourable gentleman had said that the opinions of the French were certainly specious in themselves, and calculated to intoxicate the minds of the lower ranks of men; but that, in their own nature, they would, sooner or later, generate such a tyranny as that which Robespierre exhibited, which again, in its own nature, would correct the impression which the specious opinions had originally made. The war, then, with all its disasters, had been so far useful that it had accelerated the conviction which Robespierre's tyranny would of itself have more slowly produced. The war was a sort of yeast that fermented this tyranny: and thus, in this idle train of reasoning, was the House presented with another theory in excuse of the war. If men were to play with such theories as matter of amusement, he should certainly not contend about them. He should then be extremely willing to leave them as a very good theme for schoolboys, as the honourable seconder of the motion had said; but it was a dreadful thing when such theories were taken up by statesmen, and gravely acted upon as legitimate causes for plunging their country into the horrors of war. Such theories might suit well for a literary or a political disputant, and might be made very amusing either in a club-room or in a pamphlet; but for a man to undertake the office of a statesman and to bring such theories into practice was such an outrage, not merely upon common sense but upon moral duty, as must shock the heart of every considerate and of every feeling mind. What a picture of human wantonness did it not exhibit that, in order to ascertain the question whether a certain set of opinions might be brought so much more speedily into disrepute, it was a good and right thing that a hundred millions of money should be squandered, and hundreds of thousands of our fellow-creatures be put to death! In his mind, a war against opinions was in no one instance, and could not be, either just or pardonable. A war of self-defence against acts he could understand, he could explain, and he could justify; but no war against opinions could be supported by reason or by justice: it was drawing the sword of the inquisition. How could we blame all those abominable acts of bloodshed and torture which had been committed from time to time under the specious name of religion, when we ourselves had the presumption to wage a

similar war? Who would say that all the blood that had been spilt from the fury of religious enthusiasm might not have been made to flow from the pure but misguided motive of correcting opinions, when we ourselves thus dared to dip our hands in the blood of our fellow-creatures on the mere pretext of correcting the errors of opinion? We must change all the doctrines that we had been taught to cherish about religious persecution and intolerance; we must begin to venerate the authors of the holy inquisition and consider them as pious and pure men who committed their murders for the beneficent purpose of correcting the heresies which they considered as so abominable, and restoring the blessings of what they conceived to be the only true system of Christianity. In the same manner the present war against opinions was to be entitled to our esteem, and its authors to be venerated for their morality. In the war they also were great conquerors; they had lost towns, cities, nay kingdoms, they had squandered a hundred millions of money, they had lost a hundred thousand men, they had lost their allies, they had lost the cause of the emigrants, they had lost the throne to the family of the Bourbons,—but they had gained a set of rather better opinions to France!

Mr. Fox contended that, at every moment from the commencement of the war to the present instant, our ministers might have negotiated with the French upon better terms than they could at this time; and that our relative situation had been gradually growing worse. The famous decree of the 19th of November, 1792, was the first great pretext for going to war. That decree, he had always said, we might have got rid of by negotiation. But if that decree was an obstacle to negotiation it was well known that the disgusting tyrant Robespierre himself not only formally repealed it, but made it the pretext for murdering Brissot and about one hundred persons more, whom he called its authors. Why not negotiate after that decree was repealed? Oh! they were afraid of the fascination of French principles on the minds of the people of this country. But surely they could not say that these principles continued to be fascinating and tempting after the reign of Robespierre. If ever they had any attraction for the popular mind they surely must have lost it and become, on the contrary, the detestation and horror of every human being as exhibited under the implacable tyranny of that despicable miscreant. Did they make overtures of peace when these principles had lost their temptation? What! it would be said, would you have treated with Robespierre?

Why not with Robespierre? Do we not daily treat with tyrants? He would have treated with Robespierre; not because he did not think his government the most disgusting tyranny that ever existed, but because England had nothing to do with his tyranny. On the 27th of July Robespierre was cut off, and his principles were declared to be infamous. Why did not ministers then make overtures of peace? There was nothing in their former conduct that could give that House or the nation confidence in their intentions of making peace whenever the favourable opportunity should arrive. On the contrary, they stood convicted of fraud; for when an honourable friend of his (Mr. Grey) made a motion on the 26th of January last, which it was not found convenient directly to oppose, an amendment was moved declaring that they were ready to enter into a negotiation whenever there should be a government established in France capable of maintaining the customary relations of amity and peace. Did they offer negotiation when it was proved by experience that France had such a government? It had been proved that France did maintain such relations of peace and amity, for Prussia had made peace with her, Spain had made peace with her, many of the states of Germany had made peace with her and, among others, the Elector of Hanover had made peace. The honourable seconder of the motion had said that anyone who made an argument on the conduct of the Elector of Hanover, and reasoned on it as an example for England, would deserve to be treated as a schoolboy. He must submit to incur the imputation; for he confessed, with deference to the honourable gentleman, that it was worthy to be discussed. He was ready to own that there might be situations in which the conduct of the Elector of Hanover in a negotiation might not be a model for England; but what was the case here? The right honourable gentleman opposite, in speaking of the state of France, said that if a peace was concluded with her in her then condition he should at least have to exclaim:

- Potuit quæ plurima virtus  
Esse, fuit; toto certatum est corpore regni.

Her situation had not changed when the Hanoverian minister thought it his duty to negotiate with them for peace. Would the right honourable gentleman say on the occasion:

- Potuit quæ plurima virtus  
Esse, fuit; toto certatum est corpore regni?

He did not believe that he would venture to make any such assertion.

They had heard that night much panegyric on the new constitution of France. They might almost have supposed themselves sitting in the convention and to have heard Louvet, or some other author of the new constitution, delivering a panegyric on it. All our hopes were now to be fixed upon this new constitution. He confessed, for one, he was not willing to place much dependence upon a constitution of which he knew nothing and which had not been tried; but this was the new theory of the day; this constitution was to be capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity. Mark the conclusion of this argument, that the proper time for treating together for peace was to be put off until we had experience of this new constitution. What was to be the term of probation he knew not; one thing only was certain, that on this new pretext the war was to be continued. What if this constitution, like all their former constitutions, should fail? Why, then our hopes of peace must fail too and we must begin again. What a miserable series of subterfuge and expedient was all this! But, say they, would you make peace with a country that changes its constitution so often? To which, said Mr. Fox, I answer yes, I would; if they changed their constitution every week, nay, every day, if they had seven constitutions a week I would treat with them. What have I to do with their changes of constitution? Experience has shown that neither the changes of men nor the changes of constitution have had any effect on the engagements which they have formed with foreign countries. I will not speak of the recent treaties they have entered into; but let us look how all the successive parties have acted towards Sweden in the neutrality which she established. The party of Brissot, the party of the Mountain which succeeded the party of the Girondists, the individual tyranny of Robespierre into which the Mountain subsided, the party which overthrew Robespierre, and all the shades and changes of government which have happened since, have with uniform fidelity observed the treaty with Sweden and maintained the relations of peace and amity which subsisted between them. In like manner some changes have happened since the treaty with Prussia, and it has nevertheless been regularly maintained. It is idle to talk of the theory of a constitution being a ground of dependence for the observance of a treaty. If a rational treaty is made, and it is the interest of the parties to keep it, that is the only true and wise dependence which you can have for the continuance of peace.

It had been said, continued Mr. Fox, that much had been done

to meliorate and soften down the opinions of France. He asked whether a recognition of their independence and an offer to treat would not do more to bring the people of that country to an amicable disposition to treat than all our failures had hitherto done? But it was urged that the offer to treat ought first to come from France. He said that the offer ought to come from us because we had made resolutions and had been guilty of the indiscretion of coming to declarations that stood in the way of negotiation. These must be done away in order to bring us to an even footing. It was said, would you leave them the Low Countries and Holland? That House was not the place, nor was the present the time, to talk of terms. There was no doubt of one important fact, and ministers might go to a negotiation with a confidence of that fact, namely, that if France on account of her successes exacted high terms such as were inconsistent with the honour and interests of this country, they would be supported in the dire, but then necessary, alternative of continuing the war. The terms at the same time in every negotiation must depend on the relative situation of the parties. But he would not admit of that eternal evasion that the time was improper. One year we were too high to treat, another year we were too low; and thus the continuance of the war was prolonged without any calculation being made whether the expense of continuing it for one year was not more than the difference of terms we might expect between a good and a bad relative situation. In his mind every time was the proper time for treating; and it would not be denied but that we had suffered more favourable periods to escape than we were likely again to possess. When we were masters of Valenciennes and Condé, and France was beset on every side, with insurrections raging in her bowels, that was the favourable time to treat. But no, we were then too high. What! treat when she almost lay expiring at our feet? We suffered that moment to pass. Last year, again, we had great success in the West Indies; Guadaloupe and St. Lucia were ours, in addition to Martinique, and France was obviously desirous of peace. No, then again we were too high, and we were asked in a lofty strain, in the month of June last, What, shall we treat with her when she lies in her last agony? Nothing, they said, could save her, and it was our interest to withhold from her the peace of which she was desirous. The event has proved that the prediction was not well founded; and here we are, after three years' war, reduced to a state in which we are said to be too low to treat, with nothing left us but the hopes that some day



or another a favourable opportunity will arise for negotiation. In the meantime we have only one of all our allies left to us, and that ally must, by the principle on which she has acted for the last year, be hired to continue her alliance.

All our hopes were to be founded on our conquests in the West Indies. Let us look with an impartial eye at the state of our West Indies. Was there anything very consoling in that quarter of the world? He dreaded to encounter the examination. The French commerce, it was said, was utterly annihilated; and the French navy, too, was reduced. We had certainly had many brilliant naval achievements, which did immortal honour to the British flag; but, at the same time, it would not be said that our own trade was entirely protected. Insurance to Jamaica had risen from four to eight per cent.; and he did not think that even our internal situation was improved. His majesty's speech had held out a melancholy picture with respect to the quantity of grain in the kingdom, and the subject was recommended to their most serious consideration. Whenever it came before them he would give it certainly the most careful and the most impartial examination. It was not his opinion that it was greatly within the province of human legislation to do much on such a topic; but what could be done in the way of regulation he trusted they should with one voice steadily and expeditiously pursue. Nothing, he believed, would do so much towards preventing the evil of a scarcity as to give to the people the restoration of peace, which would be likely to bring with it its usual companion, plenty. It was an insult on common sense to say that war and military expeditions did not, in their very nature, aggravate scarcity by increasing consumption. Putting the whole country into the military state which England was at this time at home necessarily increased the consumption of grain; and if this was the case, how much more did the argument hold good with respect to expeditions to distant parts? The quantity of increased consumption, without taking into the account the quantities damaged and lost, was immense, and he would be bold to say that if government, instead of interfering with regular merchants and putting an end to all the active competition of men more expert in trade than themselves, had followed the example of the government of France with respect to the ships at Brest, and had unloaded the transports that were sent to Quiberon Bay, they would have done more towards alleviating the late scarcity than by all the corn which their agents imported.

He could not leave that miserable expedition to Quiberon Bay without again expressing his indignation at it. The House would do him the justice to recollect how much beyond his usual pertinacity he had urged them to avoid the indiscretion and cruelty of employing the emigrants on any such expedition. He had said that they could not be employed so as to stand on the same terms with our own troops; that their condition would be desperate in regard to France; that therefore it was neither politic with respect to ourselves, nor kind and considerate with regard to them; that if we employed them on any such expedition we identified their cause with ours and made it impossible for us to retract with honour, whatever might be the events of the war. What was the answer to this reasoning? That, in fact, their cause and ours was the same, and that the crown of George III. was not safe upon his head if they were not reinstated in their country. Thus the die was cast; they were thus invited to join the fatal standard; they embarked in our cause, which they were thus told was the same as their own, and they were sent on that fatal expedition which every feeling heart must deplore. Though he could not entertain the idea which some coarse and vulgar minds had taken up, that certain ministers in the cabinet, reflecting on the indiscretion they had committed in thus charging themselves with so many of these emigrants, had sent them on this forlorn enterprise as a happy riddance, yet he must repeat that if the justice and indignation of the country did not fix a censure upon the authors of that expedition, the disgrace of it would eternally rest upon the character of the nation. When he first moved for entering into a negotiation with France it was said, What! would you negotiate with men about to stain their hands with the blood of their sovereign? Yet now, if the present speech from the throne meant to say anything honestly, it meant that with these very men ministers would have no objection to negotiate at a certain crisis. The nature of this murder, then, was such as to be washed away after a two or three years' purification. And even with Tallien, who, among others, dipped his hands in royal blood, they would have no objection to treat; though whatever was the conduct of that person on other occasions, the boldness with which he came forward to destroy the tyranny of Robespierre did him great honour. It had always been his opinion that if we could not get men of pure morals and men of personal esteem to treat with, we must take the men we could find; taking care that our treaty should be founded on such principles of moderation and

justice as should not be likely to vary with times or parties, and which it should be the interest of both countries to maintain. Instead of this we had acted upon a set of unprincipled delicacies, by which this country had been reduced to such a state of distress as for the last six months to make almost every common man dependent upon charity for subsistence. Was not such a state more likely to undermine the loyalty and obedience they were desirous to cherish than all the fascination of French principles? Was it not likely that under such a pressure undisciplined minds might be led to cherish the idea that that government could not be perfectly sound nor practically happy which inflicted on so large a proportion of its people so much misery? It must be a matter of great consolation to hear from his majesty's speech that, instead of any such refractory sentiment, a very general spirit of order and submission to the laws had been manifested by his people; and their pleasure ought to be increased when they recollected the dreadful and dark conspiracies which raged in the country a twelvemonth ago. These conspiracies had been quashed in a most extraordinary way; they had been quashed by the full, clear and honourable acquittal of all the conspirators: and now this "order and submission to the laws" was a matter of exultation to his majesty, when the habeas corpus suspension act was in full force!

Another most extraordinary argument had been adduced for the war by an honourable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Jenkinson); the war, he said, was quite necessary, in order to enable men of rank to inveigh with becoming spirit against French principles and the diabolical doctrines of Jacobinism. He was very ready to allow that the philippics against French principles, in which gentlemen in that House and elsewhere so liberally indulged themselves, did require some means to give them currency: but that they wanted a war to give them force, that nothing less than an army of 200,000 men and a navy of 110,000 men could make these philippics go down, he did not know till now. He remembered it was an accusation against Roland, that in order to corrupt the public mind by propagating his opinions, he had squandered much of the public money. Roland, in his defence, said he had certainly not squandered much of the public money; he had only spent 30,000 livres Tournois, and that in assignats, in printing; whereas it had cost our ministers one hundred millions sterling to circulate and support their harangues against the French! A more extraordinary means of publishing their invectives could not have

been thought of. One would have thought that, having their civil list, their patronage, their places, their pensions and their newspapers by which to spread and give currency to their abuse against the French, it was strange that they should hit upon a war as the only means to recommend their invectives to the taste of the country. If he could not entirely agree with the honourable gentleman as to the war being begun only in aid of the intemperate language and violent epithets which were thrown out upon the French, yet nothing was so certain as that the inflamed passions which gave rise to that language gave rise also to the war; and that the good sense and manly feelings which would have avoided the one would also have directed us to the rational course which would have prevented the other. The honourable gentleman spoke of the rights of man among the reprobated French principles. That all men had equal rights he would not stop to argue; it was a truth which the honourable gentleman himself must feel. It was not the fallacy of the principles that had made the French Revolution disgusting, but its atrocities; it was the misapplication and misuse that had produced so much turpitude and ruin. Of these principles he was ready to defend the greater part; the abuse of principles had, indeed, caused the mischief in France; but the principles themselves remained still pure and unalterable. Mr. Fox concluded with saying that for these reasons he could not consent to vote for the address which had been moved; he held in his hand an amendment, expressing in short terms the facts he had enumerated, and drawing from them the practical use that ought to be made of them. He then read the amendment, as follows:

"We beg leave humbly to entreat your majesty to review the events of the three last years, and to compare the situation and circumstances of the belligerent powers at the period when hostilities commenced and at the present moment; to consider that a great majority of the numerous allies, on whose co-operation your majesty chiefly relied for success, have abandoned the common cause, and sought for security in peace, while others have been unfortunately thrown into alliance with the enemy: that our foreign possessions in the West Indies have, in many instances, been overrun, pillaged and destroyed, and the security of all of them put in imminent hazard: that the expeditions to the coast of France have proved either disgraceful or abortive; tending, without any rational prospect of public benefit, to tarnish the British name by a shameful sacrifice of those to whom your majesty's ministers had held out the hope of public protection: that amidst all these adverse and disgraceful events there has been an expenditure of blood and treasure

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unparalleled in the history of former wars. Such being the result of the measures which have been pursued, we cannot honestly discharge our duty to your majesty, the country, and ourselves without fervently imploring your majesty to reflect upon the evident impracticability of attaining, in the present contest, what have hitherto been considered as the objects of it.

"We therefore humbly entreat your majesty no longer to act upon the opinion that the governing powers of France are incapable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity. An opinion formerly proved to be unfounded by the situation of the States of America, and of those nations of Europe who have throughout maintained a safe and dignified neutrality; and recently by the conduct and present condition of Prussia and Spain, and the princes of the empire. But that your majesty will be graciously pleased to take decided and immediate measures for bringing about a peace with France, whatever may be the present or future form of her internal government, and look for indemnity where alone indemnity is to be found; in the restoration of industry, plenty, and tranquillity at home.

"While we thus earnestly implore your majesty to consider, in your royal wisdom, how fruitless the pursuit of the war is become, and how idle and imaginary the supposed obstacle to peace, we declare that if the existing powers in France were to reject a pacific negotiation proposed by your majesty upon suitable terms, and to persevere in hostilities for their own aggrandisement, or with a view to the establishment of their system of government in other countries, we would strenuously support a vigorous prosecution of the war, confident that the spirit of the nation, when roused in such a cause, will still be able to accomplish what is just and necessary, however exhausted and weakened by the ill-concerted projects of those who have directed your majesty's councils."

After Mr. Pitt had replied to Mr. Fox, the House divided on Mr. Fox's amendment:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>
YEAS	{ Mr. Whitbread } { Mr. Grey }	59.—NOES	{ Mr. Jenkinson } { Mr. J. Smyth } 240.

It was consequently negatived.

## KING'S MESSAGE RESPECTING A NEGOTIATION WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE

*December 9, 1795.*

On the 8th of December Mr. Pitt presented a message from the king that the crisis which was going on in France at the commencement of the session had led to such an order of things as would induce his majesty to meet any disposition to negotiate on the part of the enemy with an earnest desire to conclude peace whenever it could be effected on just and suitable terms for himself and his allies. On the following day Mr. Pitt moved an address of thanks for the message and of assurance that until the period of negotiation should arrive the House would continue to afford his majesty vigorous support in the prosecution of the war.

Mr. Sheridan avowed himself of opinion that the intention of the minister was to frustrate the motion for peace, of which his honourable friend Mr. Grey had given notice. What other motive, he asked, could induce the minister to this change of language respecting the French, whom he had so lately represented as unable to continue the war, and on the brink of destruction? The men who governed that country were the same who had put the king to death, and with whom, our ministry had declared, no settled order of things could ever take place. But whoever were the governors of France, Mr. Sheridan insisted that no reason of that sort ought to prevent an accommodation. On that ground he would move the following amendment: "Your majesty's faithful Commons, having thus manifested their determination to give your majesty the most vigorous support in the further prosecution of the war, in case just and reasonable terms of peace should be refused on the part of the enemy, and having declared the cordial satisfaction they feel at your majesty's gracious intention to meet any disposition to negotiation, on the part of the enemy, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, cannot at the same time avoid expressing the deep regret they feel that your majesty should ever have been advised to consider the internal order of things in France to have been such as should not have induced your majesty at any time to meet a disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy: And your faithful Commons feel themselves at this conjuncture the more forcibly called on to declare this opinion, because, if the present existing order of things in France be admitted as the motive and inducement to negotiation, a change in that order of things may be considered as a ground for discontinuing a negotiation begun, or even for abandoning a treaty concluded: Wherefore, your majesty's faithful Commons, duly reflecting on the calamitous waste of treasure and of blood to which it is now manifest the acting on this principle

has so unfortunately and so largely contributed, and greatly apprehensive of the grievous and ruinous consequences to which the persevering to act on such principles must inevitably tend, do humbly and earnestly implore your majesty that it may be altogether abandoned and disclaimed; and that the form of government, or internal order of things, in France, whatever they may be, or shall become, may be no bar to a negotiation for restoring to your majesty's subjects the blessings of peace, whenever it can be effected on just and suitable terms for your majesty and your allies: And as the principal bar to a negotiation for peace appears to have been your majesty's having been hitherto advised to consider the order of things in France as precluding your majesty from meeting a disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy, your faithful Commons now humbly beseech your majesty to give distinct directions that an immediate negotiation may be entered on the above salutary object."

The amendment was seconded by Mr. Grey, who advanced a variety of facts and reasonings upon them to prove the propriety of treating. Mr. Pitt replied that until the present opportunity none had offered to encourage ideas of peace, which, however, had not been prevented by the mere existence of a republic in France, but by a total absence of any species of regular government. The change now was manifest: the new constitution was contrary to the doctrine of universal equality; the French had now a mixed form of government, admitting of distinctions in society; and their legislature was not constructed on a pure democracy. This fully authorised the ministry to consider them in quite another light than formerly; but did not furnish any pretence for depriving ministers of their right to act in the name of the executive power, without undue interference, which must certainly be the case were the amendment to be adopted.

Mr. Fox said that, however he might differ from much of what had fallen from the right honourable gentleman, however he might object to the terms of the address which had been moved, there was one thing which must give him pleasure; he must congratulate the House and the country on the complete change which had happily taken place in the language and in the system of government. The House would believe him when he said that he rejoiced, and when he congratulated them upon this change, since he had also to congratulate himself upon the occasion, as this change of language and of system pronounced his pardon, and was a complete absolution of all his past sins. Ministers had made a total retractation of all the charges they had brought against him for the motions he had made, and for the doctrines he had held, from the commencement of the war to the present day; they had fully acquitted him, and had positively declared that, in every sentiment he had uttered, he was right, and that the House should have acted upon his

opinion; for all along he had maintained the doctrine now laid down in his majesty's message. Three years ago, namely on the 15th of December 1792, he had made a motion for a negotiation for peace. In June 1793 he had done the same thing; he had also moved an amendment in the course of the same session tending to the same purpose. In January 1794 he had supported the motion of an honourable friend; and in the latter end of the same session he had maintained and supported in argument the same sentiment as that now conveyed in his majesty's message, namely, that it was fit and proper to negotiate with the existing government of France. It had been his uniform argument that, at every moment from the first commencement of hostilities to the present, it was wise and politic to make the declaration which had been now submitted to the House,—that France was in a state to negotiate with this country. He had, therefore, at present this triumph, that ministers retracted by this message all the language they had held in answer to his motions, and all the imputations which they had thrown upon him. "What!" they said, "treat with men whose hands are yet reeking with the blood of their sovereign! What! treat with men who would come here with principles that are destructive of all government!" Such were their arguments, and yet mark their conduct: they now declared themselves ready to treat with the new directory of France, four members of which had actually participated in the judgment and death of their sovereign, and were directly implicated in that act. He regretted exceedingly the absence of some gentlemen from the House this evening, who had signalised themselves by reproaching his sentiments and conduct in the severest terms, because from them also he might have received the same sentence of pardon and absolution, and because they might now have been ready to confess that the censures in which they had so liberally dealt were the effect of sudden irritation or gross misapprehension. Other modes of attack had been practised; not the least remarkable of which was that he and his friends left nothing to the discretion of ministers. When by their motions they had merely called upon the House to consider the existing government of France as capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with their allies, a complaint was made on behalf of ministerial discretion, and the supporters of the motions were accused of a wish to deliver over his majesty's advisers bound hand and foot to the governors of France. They did no such thing; neither his two amendments, nor



the motions of his honourable friend (Mr. Grey), went so far as the present message from the crown. His amendments did no more than declare that there were no embarrassments to treating in the form of the government of France; nothing that made it impossible or improper for this country to treat. The motion of his honourable friend was still more gentle. It was that there was nothing in the government of France that tended to retard a negotiation. But the present message declared at once their readiness to treat under certain circumstances, and the House were now called upon to do what had then been declared to be so improper, so degrading, and so ignominious. All these foul epithets, however, were now completely retracted, and justice was done to the good intentions and to the sound policy of the gentlemen on his side of the House.

The chancellor of the exchequer had thought to involve them in a difficulty by insinuating that his honourable friend had argued against the address. But this Mr. Fox positively denied, for he had not opposed the address, but thinking it inadequate fully to express the sentiments which the House ought to feel on the occasion, he had proposed an amendment more definite in its object, and more comprehensive in its provisions. He could not, however, but protest against a mode of arguing by which a person was not allowed to approve of an address if he ventured to express his disapprobation of the measures by which the situation was produced in which the address was moved. If it should be said that it was an opposition to the address, because they proposed an amendment, he must protest against such reasoning, which tended to deprive him of the freedom of speech. If he must agree to a proposition only in the terms in which it was put, he was deprived of deliberation, and was no longer permitted to be a free reasoner. But this would not, he supposed, be seriously disputed; and it would not be ascribed to him that he was an enemy to peace because he agreed to an amendment to a message which was extremely equivocal. An enemy to peace! The whole tenor of his reasoning from the commencement of the war was that every moment was favourable to a negotiation for peace. Had he any objections to that peace being concluded by the honourable gentleman? None; for he should think it an addition to the blessings of peace, if the country could along with it procure the advantage of bringing his majesty's ministers into disgrace; and he should conceive that they were completely disgraced by the retraction of every assertion they had

made, and by the surrender of every object which they had held out as the pretext of war. If this should be said to be an invidious mode of speaking, he had no objection to plead guilty to the charge, for he most assuredly did think that next to the blessings of peace would be the disgrace of ministers who had entered upon the war without reason and rejected every opportunity of concluding a peace upon terms infinitely more favourable for the country than any that they were now likely to obtain. It might, however, be their consoling idea that if they had rejected peace upon better terms than they were now likely to obtain, still they had brought the country to such a pitch of calamity, and so clamorous were the people, that peace upon any terms would be received from them as a boon and an atonement for all their transgressions. Such might be their feeling. But, if it were possible to believe that the members of that House could so far surrender their pride, their independence, and their spirit, as to justify such a sentiment, he could only say that they surrendered their public principles to personal motives, but that such conduct was inconsistent with their duty as representatives of the people, and incompatible with their character as men of honour. No; though they should give peace to the country, he would not agree to forget their demerits. He should still think himself bound to accuse them as the authors of all the calamities that we had suffered, and he should not think it was a sufficient atonement for their conduct that they had prevailed on a majority of that House to support them in the system.

He now came to consider the question of the amendment. And first, it was necessary to inquire whether the address wanted explanation; and secondly, whether it was not necessary, in addition to the declaration which it contained, to come to some precise expression of the sense of the House as to the necessity and wisdom of negotiation, whatever might be the form of the government of France. The right honourable gentleman had said that they should be left open to negotiate, but not be obliged to it. Upon this he would inquire whether there did exist at this moment a form of government in France that in the opinion of his majesty's ministers made it wise, fit, and practicable for them to treat? This was the question. Was it not the intention of gentlemen that with such a government they should treat? Last year, when his honourable friend made a motion for pacification, the right honourable gentleman objected to it as being a practical declaration for treating, and

he moved an amendment, which he called a conditional declaration, that we were disposed to treat whenever there was a form of government in France capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other countries. That time was come. His majesty's message expressly declared that they were now come to such a form of government. Nay, a more precise term was used than in the amendment of last year, for, instead of other countries, the message expressly stated Great Britain. Then, if they were come to this state, why not declare, said Mr. Fox, that you will treat with them? Why not act upon your own declaration? Why not be steady to the principle which you have pronounced, and declare that you will treat? Since that declaration was made in the month of June last, there was not a statesman in Europe, except his majesty's ministers, who did not believe that France was in a state capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with other countries. Their conduct to neutral powers had demonstrated the fact. Prussia had acted upon the demonstration, and had concluded a peace accordingly. It was evident to all the world, then, except to the king's ministers; and if they had been sincere in the declaration that they made in the month of June last, it would have been manifest to them also, and they would have acted upon it. With this glaring fact before their eyes, would the House again leave it in their power to juggle with words, and to evade their own declarations? Would they not now think it necessary in prudence to bind them down to a specific act upon their own words? If they did not, what possible confidence could they have in the present declaration more than in the past? They might say, It was true that at the time of making such declaration there appeared to be a disposition in France to treat; but now circumstances have changed, and there is not the same disposition. They might affect to see circumstances unknown or totally disregarded by the rest of Europe, and might say that they were not bound by the present declaration, and that the House had come to no opinion which made it necessary for them to treat; such had been the result of their former conduct. The right honourable gentleman had persuaded the House to leave them to the exercise of their own discretion, and they had neglected the time which other statesmen and other cabinets had wisely seized and happily improved. If the House desired, therefore, that the blessings of peace should be restored to the country, they must take care that the present address should be precise

and definite. If it was not clear and intelligible, it was fit that it should be amended, and the experience of last year ought to convince them that no loophole should be left, no latitude given, to that disposition to equivocate which they had so much reason to lament.

Speaking of France, the right honourable gentleman said that the present was a fit government with which to treat; and he had accused his honourable friend (Mr. Grey) of having made a slip of the tongue when he said that by a singular state of things they might be said to be attacking the French constitution which ministers were defending. It was no slip of the tongue; nor was there anything wrong in the reasoning. His honourable friend never otherwise had defended the former constitutions of France as being good governments for the people of that country, but good in relation to others. He and every gentleman around him had contended, not that the constitutions of France were well framed for the happiness of the people of that country, but that they were sufficient for all the purposes of good neighbourhood, and of preserving peace and amity with others. They never attempted to defend the government of Robespierre. The right honourable gentleman would not do him the injustice to impute to him an approbation of that detestable monster. He had always said that every one of the successive governments of France had shown a disposition and capacity to maintain their treaties with foreign nations. He was of the same opinion still; and if any one man should rise in his place and assert that he saw good reason to believe that the present government of France was more capable than any of its predecessors to maintain those relations, he must only say that he should very much doubt either his sincerity or his judgment. It had been a darling expression to call the state of France for three years past a state of anarchy. It would have been a more correct description to have called it a state of tyranny, intolerable beyond that of any, perhaps, that ever was experienced in the history of man. To say that he rejoiced in the probability of its termination was, he hoped, unnecessary. He certainly rejoiced in it as much as he did in the fall of the tyranny of the House of Bourbon. But was that tyranny capable of maintaining terms with foreign powers? Most certainly it was. And if this assertion should be denied, he called upon gentlemen to produce a single instance in which they had departed from the strict performance of their engagements; a single instance in which any one of the adverse parties

that tore one another to pieces, and in their despicable and horrid conflicts tore also the bosom of their country, ever violated the engagements they had made out of France. Did not the Brissotine party maintain the treaties of their predecessors? Did not the execrable tyrant Robespierre himself observe with equal fidelity the treaties made by Brissot? Were not his successors uniformly steady in their adherence to the external system which had been adopted? It had been observed with truth that no one period in the French revolution had been marked by a more sacred regard to the neutrality of foreign powers than the reign of that execrable tyrant Robespierre; and it would not be denied but that treaties had been made with tyrants as execrable; and considering what sort of treaties ministers had made, with whom they had made them, and what acts of base and abandoned tyranny they had not discountenanced, it was not worthy the manly character of the British nation to abet them in their resistance to a treaty with France.

Having thus shown, in his mind, the futility of all objections to treat on account of the insecurity of treaty, Mr. Fox came to their next argument, that now France was in the greatest possible distress. Granted. Was that a reason for treating now? Was it because this very stable government was on the point of annihilation that it was capable of maintaining the relations with foreign powers? The absurdity was too gross for argument. But if their distress was a reason for treating with them, had they not experienced this distress a twelve-month ago? Let the House remember the speeches of the right honourable gentleman and his noble friend (Lord Mornington) on the state of their assignats, when they said that their depreciation was at the rate of eighty per cent. Ay, but they had not then come to sufficient distress to be solicitous of peace, and now it seems they were come to this disposition. And what was of more consequence, it seemed that they had now a constitution which was quite fit for all the purposes of negotiation. If ministers depended upon this slender thread, our security was slight indeed. He was not about to praise or to censure their new constitution; that he owned could be properly estimated only by experience. But whether it was good, bad, or indifferent did not signify a farthing to the present argument. Whether it was calculated to give happiness to the people of France was none of their concern; it was not with the constitution but with the government of

France that they had to do. That government they had before, and had, he would venture to say, in as perfect a shape as they had now. Nay, if he could trust to an assertion that had been made in that House but very lately, had more perfectly, since it was said that some of their generals had violated the treaty that had been made with Prussia. What was the construction to be put upon this conduct? That this government, the only one under which the slightest violation of treaty had been known since the Revolution, was also the only one with which it was proper for this country to treat. [It was whispered across the House by ministers that this violation happened before the establishment of the present government.] Before! said Mr. Fox: the fact was expressly stated as an argument by the other side of the House that day se'nnight; that it was totally without foundation he believed; he certainly never had heard it except in that House upon that occasion. But now they were to have perfect confidence in these identical men, because France had now two houses of legislature instead of one! Their nature was to be changed, their insincerity to be obviated, and every objection to be at an end, because France had now two houses instead of one! There was something so extremely whimsical, and so unworthy of statesmen, in this mode of reasoning, that he would not stop to reply to it. He did not mean to criticise the present French constitution; he certainly thought it better planned than any of the preceding; but he could not look to it with greater confidence than to any of its forerunners.

He came now to speak of the origin of the war, in which he would not cease to say that ministers were the aggressors. It was their eternal answer to this charge, that France had declared the war. Their incessant recurrence to this feeble subterfuge proceeded from a conscious qualm that the accusation was well founded. In his opinion, even in a case of actual insult, it was the duty of statesmen to attempt to procure redress by negotiation before they recurred to the argument of war. Had ministers taken this course? The pretexts were that the French had threatened to deprive our allies, the Dutch, of the free navigation of the Scheldt, and that they had made a declaration threatening all the world with the dangers of fraternity. Grant that these were legitimate grounds upon which it was the duty of this country to demand satisfaction, was it not the duty of ministers to negotiate for that satisfaction? The French had a minister at this court. Why did

they not express to that minister the terms upon which they would continue their amity? In every correspondence of the sort it was incumbent on both parties to state explicitly what they desired to be done, and what they would do in return. Let gentlemen look at the correspondence which had been published, and they would see that there was no declaration on the part of ministers upon what terms they were disposed to continue their amity. But grant even to government their demand, that the French were the aggressors, and that this was merely a defensive war: then it was the nature of a defensive war that it should be pursued on the motives of defence, and that every moment should be seized upon when it might be possible to obtain the security for which it was undertaken. He appealed to the House and to the country if this had been their conduct. He demanded whether, after the defeat of Dumourier, when Belgium was recovered, and when French Flanders was overrun, a peace upon the terms of security, and upon such terms as we had not now either reason or right to expect, might not have been obtained? If the war had been really defensive, if it had been undertaken only to resist encroachments, terms ought then to have been offered upon which we might have procured reparation, security and indemnity. Terms were offered by the French: Maret was sent here commissioned to offer terms. But they were rejected. Upon what principle? Not because we were fighting about a limit, about a boundary; but for that security which could only be obtained by the destruction of their government. He would not say that it was expressly stated that the ancient monarchy should be reinstated, though, by-the-by, Lord Hood, in his declaration at Toulon, had impressed that opinion upon every part of France; but both then, and at every time since, it had been the avowed object of ministers in the war to destroy the Jacobin government. Was the Jacobin government destroyed? Was the government founded on the rights of man at an end? Had the declaration of the 19th of November, 1792, been any otherwise abandoned than it had been two years ago? Why had they not then treated before? Because they had objected to treat expressly with any government founded on the rights of man. He would not say that the right honourable gentleman had gone the length of asserting that it would be a *bellum ad internecionem*; he had said there might be a case of extremity, but he made use of a quotation which had this effect, that it left an impression of his meaning on the

memory, and the words were not liable to misconstruction. His quotation was:

Potuit quæ plurima virtus  
Esse, fuit. Toto certatum est corpore regni.

Such was the right honourable gentleman's declaration. But now we were come to a government when we might surrender all our former assertions, and safely treat for peace. Had we then obtained the objects of the war? The first was our obligation to defend our ally, the States General. He had always lamented the fate of that unhappy people. They were entangled in a situation from which, whoever were conquerors, they could not escape; whoever gained, their ruin was inevitable. Had we saved our ally? It was the boast that we had taken the Cape of Good Hope. Good God! was this safety for Holland? We had abandoned their possessions in Europe to France, while we had marked out their dependencies in the East for our share of the plunder. Our protection was like that of our allies toward Poland; we divided it for its safety; and it was an argument for having abandoned all its European possessions to France, that we had seized, or were about to seize, on all its Asiatic territories for ourselves.

He could not help again digressing to one of the attacks which had been made upon himself. What, it had been said, would you be so dastardly as to negotiate for a peace with France, and leave Holland in their hands? Now even from this attack he was delivered, ministers had agreed to become the dastards, and to treat with France possessed of Holland. This they must acknowledge, or agree with him that there was nothing dastardly in the proposition last year. He wished to God it were as probable now as it was then that it might be recovered by negotiation. He still trusted it would be so. But there were other reasons that now induced them to negotiate for peace. The domestic state of this country was changed. He could not avoid remarking how the arguments varied. If they were speaking upon the sedition bills, and he were to assert that there were no excesses in the country that called for such unconstitutional restraints, he should instantly hear a set of pamphlets and handbills read to prove that Great Britain was almost in a state of rebellion; but if he were to demand why the present was a more fit time than any other to negotiate for peace, he should instantly be answered, because we were happily safe at home against all danger of Jacobin principles.



If he should say that by the increase of our debt, and the growing load of national burdens, there was much discontent in the country, it would be answered, No such thing; the example of France has checked every symptom of discontent with the present order of things. Then why pass the abominable bills? Why? it would on the other side be answered, because there was something so perverse and obstinate in the seditious multitude, that nothing but depriving us of our constitution could make us safe. In this way did they reason. Each measure had its own style of argument; and it was thought necessary to insult the understanding, as well as to impose chains upon the person.

We had failed, then, in Holland; and we had failed at home! What had we done for the rest of Europe? What for Prussia, for Spain, for Austria? What had been the fate of the war in general? His honourable friend had spoken generally of our disasters, with the exception of our naval exploits. The right honourable gentleman, with that peculiar cast of candour which belonged to himself, had thrown out an insinuation that his honourable friend had forgotten the achievements of his illustrious father. What fortunate impression his candid sneer had made upon the House he would not inquire. His honourable friend had spoken generally of the disasters of the war, without thinking it necessary to enumerate the particular instances in which, under the conduct of great and gallant officers, even the incapacity of ministers had not deprived the British arms of glory. But what great advantages had we obtained in the West Indies, except the glory of Sir Charles Grey's achievements? Would any man say that the manner of the loss of Guadaloupe and St. Lucia did not make us lament their previous conquest? Again, therefore, he asserted, that the war had been disastrous, inasmuch as we had failed in every object. We had lost Holland, which was one object of the war; and we had settled and riveted discontent on the minds of the people of England, not merely by the calamities arising from the war, but from the measures we had taken, and were now taking, to stifle that discontent.

Peace, however, was now said to be near. Perhaps he thought it was near, but he did not think so on account of the message from the throne. He thought so because ministers felt the sense of the country to be declared against the war; because, however they might affect to misrepresent the feeling of the country in their speeches, they felt in their hearts that there

was not one man in the kingdom, the race of money-jobbers, contractors, and interested persons only excepted, who was not sick of the war, as well as of the miserable pretexts for carrying it on. He thought, therefore, that to fix ministers to the point, they should adopt the amendment, which contained a much more clear and specific declaration than that contained in the address. He knew that it was a vulgar opinion, and surely it was the most vulgar of all vulgar opinions, that the proposers of a negotiation always stood the worst chance in that negotiation. He wished to know one instance in which this had ever been the case. In the present circumstances of Great Britain and France, he thought the advantage was evidently on the side of the proposers. For in both countries there was an evident desire for peace in the great body of the people; so that it would be impossible for the executive government of either country to reject any proposals which might be made if they were not altogether unreasonable. If, therefore, at this moment we were to make proposals to France, if they were not grossly dishonourable, their committee of directory and council of ancients would not dare to refuse them, because, by refusing them, they know that they would lose the confidence and respect of the people.

The right honourable gentleman had not thought it necessary to open his motion for the address with any exposition of the reasons why the message had been brought down at this very remarkable conjuncture. The speech from the throne was made on the 29th of October, and then no such intimation was given; but the right honourable gentleman had said that a declaration tantamount to the present was made in the king's speech, and that the people from that speech would have been justified in expecting the present message. They must judge of the impression by the effects. The speech from the throne had produced no sensation on the funds. What had the message produced? A rise in the funds that day of five or six per cent. He came therefore now to a material part of the present inquiry. Why had not the right honourable gentleman made known the substance of this message before, or at least why not stated his reasons in justification of doing it at this most suspicious moment? It had been the good practice till his time of closing the loan only the day before it was opened to parliament. If the right honourable gentleman had made his loan in that way, he must acknowledge that with the words of this message in his pocket, he ought to have made terms materially different.

If he had this message in his mind, and felt himself bound not to make an open loan, in what predicament did he stand? Messrs. Boyd and Co. very handsomely left it to him to propose the terms; then, with the knowledge of this intention, ought he not to have made a bargain upon the ground of the impression which this message was calculated to make? Were the circumstances of the country such that he was bound to make the bargain a week before he opened it? Perhaps the suspicion was well founded that his secret contract with the gentlemen, on account of bills coming due on the 10th of December, stipulated that the bargain should be made before that day. But he called upon every gentleman who heard him to say if he could believe it possible that any change could have happened so material as to justify the concealment of this intimation until after he had made his bargain, and then to bring it forth to swell the bonus to such a height; or, if any circumstances had arisen to justify the concealment then, and the intimation now, to say why the right honourable gentleman should not be called upon to state them. A loss had been suffered by the public of not less, on the meanest computation, than one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. This had been put into the pockets of persons who talked loudly of their independence, and of the disinterested support they gave to ministers. It was not his practice to impute anything personally corrupt to the right honourable gentleman, and he did not impute to him anything of the kind now; but he did think that, in decency and in duty, in regard to himself as well as to the country, he was called upon to explain this extraordinary transaction. It was a direct robbery upon the public of five or six per cent. upon the whole loan, if with the knowledge of his intention he made his bargain without a public declaration of the change that had taken place; and he must prove that he did not know of this change but a week before he declared it. The change, however, was now announced. He trusted the declaration would not have the fate of former declarations. He should rejoice in the day of peace, come when it would. When it did come, he should certainly be thankful; but he should by no means consider the restoration of peace as superseding the necessity of an inquiry into the origin, principle, and conduct of the war. For if this were neglected, it might establish a precedent upon which any minister might undertake a war without principle, conduct it with incapacity, and be acquitted of all his misdeeds immediately upon the patching

up a peace. He trusted that, with the return of peace, we should also have a return of the constitution. He should truly rejoice if, with the blessings of peace, we were also to have the next desirable blessing, that of freedom, of which we were about to be deprived. With regard to some persons in the cabinet, with whom he had been long in the habits of agreement and friendship, he knew not what effects peace was to produce upon them. They had differed upon the principles of the present war. If peace should put an end to the differences between them, and restore them to their former habits of thinking and acting, he should undoubtedly see the day with peculiar sensibility. He owned, however, that he had very little expectation of such an event. He was not so sanguine as to look for such a return. However that might be, he should ill discharge his duty to his country if he did not steadily resolve to do his utmost to bring ministers to a strict account for all the calamities that this war had engendered. He sat down, begging not to be understood as opposing the address, or disapproving of the sentiments it contained. He only wished that it had gone as far as the amendment which had been proposed by his honourable friend.

Mr. Sheridan's amendment was negatived without a division; after which the original address was agreed to.

## MR. GREY'S MOTION FOR PEACE WITH FRANCE

*February 15, 1796.*

THIS day Mr. Grey moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, stating that it is the desire of this House that his majesty may graciously be pleased to take such steps as to his royal wisdom shall appear most proper, for communicating directly to the executive government of the French republic his majesty's readiness to meet any disposition to negotiation on the part of that government, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect." He observed that, contrary to general expectation, the ministry, in lieu of a negotiation for peace, were making preparations for a continuance of the war. But with what well-grounded hope of success could they persist in this unfortunate system? There was no confidence nor unity of views in the remaining parts of the coalition; and yet this country was to bear the weight of this pretended alliance in favour of the common interest of Europe. The public was exhorted to rely on the discretion of ministers: but were they worthy of any trust after being deceived in their allies in the most material points, and still expressing a forwardness to depend on promises so repeatedly broken? The French, it was now acknowledged, were in a situation to be treated with; we ought, therefore, no longer to stand aloof.—Mr. Pitt opposed the motion. He urged the necessity of confidence in ministers, and observed that, if the House thought this confidence could not be safely vested in them, the proper mode was to address his majesty for their removal. He asserted that the French had almost exhausted their means of carrying on the war; and said that, since his majesty's message had been delivered, ministry had taken every measure, consistent with the interests of the country, to accomplish the object of it. The point to be considered was the probability of obtaining just and honourable terms; but such terms must be very different from those which the public declarations of the French had for a long time past indicated.

Mr. Fox rose and said: Notwithstanding, Sir, the mode of arguing which the right honourable gentleman has adopted this day, in introducing matter somewhat irrelevant to the question at issue, I intend to confine myself almost entirely to the subject of my honourable friend's proposition. The House will pardon me; however, if I make a few preliminary observations upon the manner in which the right honourable gentleman commenced his speech. Far be it from me to discourage any inclination that may be shown to negotiation, or in any degree

to retard the advance to peace; for whether the season for negotiation be advantageous, when compared with those which have occurred at periods which are past, it is certainly advantageous when compared with any that may be expected in future, however numerous our victories, or however unprecedented our success. I cannot, however, refrain from saying a word or two upon the past, not with a view to exaggerate the difficulties of the present, but merely in my own vindication, for having proposed pacific measures when they were refused to be adopted. Will it be said that when the Low Countries are in the hands of the enemy, when Holland is become a province of France, and when they are in possession of St. Lucia and St. Domingo, that we are in a situation in which more honourable terms of peace may be expected than when they were driven out of the Dutch provinces; when they were routed in every battle in Flanders; when they were compelled to retreat within the limits of their own territory; when Valenciennes was taken; when a considerable impression was made upon them by the emperor in the north and by Spain upon the south; in short, when they did not hold an inch of ground without the boundaries of Old France? Then we were told that it would be humiliating for the country to offer terms of peace, and that we should wait till the misfortunes of our foes should lay them prostrate at our feet.

When I proposed a pacification in the beginning of the year 1794, I was told that the late campaign had exhibited a series of triumphs more brilliant than any which the annals of the country could boast. Last year a negotiation was moved for, before Holland was totally lost, the recovery of which was assigned as a principal cause of the war; and then it was said that any proposal on our part would be degrading to the honour of the country. I hope, however, that he who thinks it possible to propose an honourable negotiation now will no longer accuse us of having entertained a wish to humiliate the country by advising the government to offer terms of peace under circumstances in which it was infinitely more advantageously situated. My argument at present does not turn upon the propriety of proposals for peace coming from one country more than from another, but upon the seasonableness of the time. I perfectly agree with the right honourable gentleman that the present is the most proper season which may well occur, and in the faith that he is inclined to improve it, I have the less disposition to press the errors of the past.

But here a question occurs—Who shall make the first step towards peace? In all wars, I think, this is a point of little importance; and in this war I think it of less importance than almost in any other. When hostilities commenced between the countries, the French held it out as a principle that they were determined to propagate their government all over Europe. How long they persevered in maintaining this absurd principle it is of little consequence now to decide. Suffice it to say that it afforded a real or ostensible ground of hostilities, and that the principle has been formally renounced in an official declaration, abjuring all interference in the internal government of any country. This is an example which we ought to follow; and when the French have announced themselves at amity with the English constitution, the English government ought to abandon every idea of intermeddling in the affairs of France, or of altering any form of government which they may think proper to adopt. Perhaps I may be told that even if terms of peace be proposed by this country, they may be rejected by the French, and that this rejection may render it necessary for us to interfere in the settlement of their form of government. But if we do not formally publish the declaration, we may at least announce our readiness to make it. And even then we do not go so far as they have done.

There was a word in the minister's speech which, notwithstanding all its pacific complexion, I was sorry to hear, and which to me appeared to indicate that it is his opinion that the present government of France has not arrived at that crisis which was particularly described in his majesty's speech. It was this, that the French government were perhaps disposed to grant to this country, as a compensation for all the losses which it has sustained from the war—the honour of its fraternisation. But does the French government persevere in that system now? I hope and trust it does not. And if it does not, why rake up the recollection of former wrongs and renew the causes of discord which no longer exist? The subject, however, chiefly depends upon a question of time. On the 8th of December a message was sent down from his majesty, stating that the affairs of France had arrived at such a crisis as to render negotiation possible. On the 29th of October, in his majesty's speech, there was a paragraph upon the subject, the meaning of which appeared to me to be by no means clear. We were told, however, that it was afterwards explained, and that the subsequent message was nothing more than the natural

consequence of the king's speech. If, then, the ideas conveyed by the message were hypothetically the opinion of the minister, who was certainly to be considered as a principal assistant in framing the speech, we are to trace the measures of government back to the 29th of October. But even supposing that the 8th of December was the earliest time that the king's cabinet ministers formed any definitive opinions upon the subject, when we take into consideration, not only the lapse of time, but the very extraordinary circumstances attending that lapse of time, it is natural to ask, did it require two months (or if we date it from the 29th October, did it require three months) to come to an understanding with our allies; or rather, was it not reasonable to expect that something might have been done in that time? The expectation was the more reasonable when we consider what those two months were. They were not two months in the heat of a campaign—they were not only in a season when God and nature united to create an armistice, but when an armistice had actually taken place—they were not during the sitting of the parliament (though I am not one of those who consider the sitting of parliament as an impediment to negotiation), but during a parliamentary recess, prolonged, as the friends of the minister gave out, for the purpose of leaving him unshackled to carry on the negotiation. When these circumstances are considered I wish to know why no steps have been taken?

I must here advert to a passage in the right honourable gentleman's speech in which he represented it as having been the policy of France to divide the allies, and when she was on the eve of sinking beneath their combined pressure, to detach some of them from the confederacy. Perhaps I am not so well acquainted with the circumstances of the war as the right honourable gentleman, or at this moment I may not have such a lively recollection of the details of its history; but I certainly do not remember any peculiar difficulties under which the enemy had the misfortune to labour at the particular conjuncture when our allies seceded from the treaty. I do not recollect that France was in circumstances of particular difficulty when the King of Prussia renounced the cause of the allies. I do not recollect that France was in a situation of unusual hardship when she concluded a peace with Spain. Nor do I recollect that the Elector of Hanover and the other German princes were exulting in the abundance of their victories when they commenced a negotiation. On the contrary, I think I have



heard that Spain sued for peace, not when Spain was in the unimpaired possession of her territory, but when the principal provinces of the empire were in the hands of the French. Nor from any information which I have received upon the subject can I pay such a compliment to the King of Prussia and the princes of Germany as to say that they offered terms of peace to the enemy when they were in the career of conquest and the zenith of their glory. I confess I cannot see (if the professions of the right honourable gentleman be true) what renders an explanation of the proceedings of the government of this country a subject of so much delicacy in the present war. If he admits that he is engaged in a clandestine negotiation, of the benefit of which he means to deprive our allies, and of which, of course, he would wish to keep them ignorant, then I conceive some motive for his conduct, and I am ready on such a supposition to allow his argument, if not honourable, to be at least logical. But if, as he declares, he is really acting in concert with our allies, where would be the harm if he were to lay all the papers which have passed upon the subject before the House? And here I cannot refrain from making one observation on the difference of situation in which we have stood with respect to our allies in the course of this contest. I cannot help remembering a glaring defect which was pointed out last year in the terms of the loan which was then voted to the emperor. It was then objected that we did not bind him to persevere in the prosecution of the war longer than he thought fit. The answer was, if we bind the emperor to prosecute the war, we must ourselves come under the same restriction. And now we are told we cannot make peace except in concert with our allies. I mention this merely to show the different representations that are given of matters according to the pressure of different arguments.

The right honourable gentleman has given us to understand something in his speech. It is material to know what he really intends to convey, to understand how much and the precise value of what he has advanced. I understand him to have said, and I beg to be corrected if I am mistaken, that measures have been already taken by ministers with a view to avail themselves of whatever circumstances may occur favourable either to making or receiving overtures of peace with France. I certainly do not mean to quibble upon words, and therefore it cannot be supposed that he can mean a continuance of the war to be one of those measures which he hopes are introductory

to negotiation. If it be understood that since the message of the 8th of December he has endeavoured, by means of communication with our allies, to learn the grounds on which they wish to negotiate, this certainly is something; but it is an instance of tardiness for which it is difficult to account. And even admitting these steps to have been taken, it still remains a question of serious urgency whether the motion of my honourable friend ought to be agreed to by the House. That the manifestation of a sincere desire to negotiate would in this country produce an effect highly popular is a fact not to be disputed. To the rest of Europe such an inclination would be no less grateful; and I will put it to the judgment of the House if they really think the country will make worse terms of peace with France because the French government know our desire for peace to be sincere? Is it not to be feared, on the other hand, that the mutual alienation of affection, and the mutual distrust which have subsisted between the countries, will create a more serious difficulty with respect to the success of any negotiation than even the terms that may be proposed? In former wars we have found that the obstructions to pacification arose more from the temper of the adverse countries than the specific terms which were brought upon the tapis. In the war of the succession, which, without exception, was the most glorious of any that this country was ever engaged in, is there a Whig at this day so bigoted as not to believe that the conferences of Gertruydenburg might have led to peace had they been properly conducted, and that the prolongation of the war arose from unextinguishable jealousy and unyielding rivalry? I am not so sanguine as to expect that no difficulty will arise in negotiation about terms. I wish to God that the situation of the country were such as to afford any reasonable ground for such an expectation. But what I contend for is this, that such has been the asperity displayed on both sides in the course of the contest that the temper of the governments will occasion a difficulty no less formidable than any that may occur in the discussion of terms—a difficulty which I am sorry to say the concluding part of the right honourable gentleman's speech was by no means calculated to remove. It may be said that the language held by the directory was insolent in the extreme. But because insolent language is held by the directory of France, is that a reason why the government of England should assume the same tone of insolence? Were we to adopt conciliatory language, the effect would be

immediate upon the temper of the French government in softening asperity and silencing abuse. And if such would be the effect in France, what might not be expected here?

It was stated by the right honourable gentleman that the motion of my honourable friend, if agreed to by the House, would so cramp, fetter, and humiliate government that it would be impossible to negotiate with honour. This is an objection which has been stated so often in the course of the war that it has entirely lost its force. When on a former occasion it was proposed to declare the government of France in a negotiable situation, the proposition was rejected with scorn, and now this very declaration has been made by ministers, and we have experienced no inconvenience from it. As to the prerogative of the crown of making peace when and how his majesty pleases, no man doubts of it; but no man, on the other hand, will doubt of the prerogative of the Commons of England to advise his majesty both as to the time and the terms of pacification. The present is not a matter of right, but a matter of discretion. I have put a case before to the House which is so appropriate to the present circumstances of the country that I may be allowed to quote it again—the case of the American war. In the course of that war we heard from a noble lord that it was the height of indiscretion in parliament to interfere with the prerogative of the king in making peace. Parliament wisely rejected the noble lord's argument, and not only declared that America was in a negotiable situation, and that the states should be acknowledged as independent, but they even declared that no offensive war should be carried on against America; and this very declaration enabled the right honourable gentleman and his associates at that time to conclude a peace, the terms of which were certainly not such as the country, in my opinion, had reason to expect from its circumstances at the time, but which redounded much to his credit when compared with the misfortunes to which it had formerly been subjected.

There are certain bugbears which have always been held out by ministers to parliament, and which have been disposed of according to its good sense at the time. The pretences of state secrets and parliamentary confidence have always been held forth as a shield for the measures of the servants of the crown; fortunately for the people, however, their constituents have not been always inclined to pay that attention to them which to superficial observers they may seem to claim. As to the state paper to which the right honourable gentleman

referred, and which he said was published at Hamburg, and was industriously circulated in this country, I have not seen it, and therefore am not qualified to reason upon it. But allowing the sentiments of the directory on the subject of peace to be as wild, fanciful, and extravagant as it is possible for them to be, that is no reason why these sentiments ought to deter us from offering terms of peace. The time in which we live is a time in which government must pay some attention to the opinion of the people whom they are appointed to govern. Were a disposition for peace on the part of the government discovered to the people of England, it would diffuse general happiness over the kingdom; and if it was made known to France, I am convinced that her concessions would be as ample as we could wish. As to the popular opinion in this country, it has for some time been evidently against the war; and I say it to the credit of ministers, that they have sacrificed something to the constitution of the country in permitting the opinion of the people respecting the war to have some weight in regulating their conduct. If the demands of France are exorbitant, let us meet them with reasonable overtures on our part, and moderation will have a greater effect than the most strenuous resistance in relaxing their exertions. I know reason has too little to do in the government of the world, and that justice and moderation must often yield to power and lawless might. This has been unhappily exemplified in the fate of Poland. Still, however, it is no light matter in national as well as private concerns to have reason on our side. I know I have been sometimes thought absurd when I argued that honour was the only just cause of war; but I still believe, and there has been nothing in late events to contradict the opinion, that reason and justice in any cause are the most powerful allies. If this be the case, let us manifest to France, to Europe, and to the world, a spirit of moderation; and let us this night address his majesty to commence a negotiation with the republic of France. I say the republic of France; for there is more in names than one would sometimes be apt to imagine. Ministers have talked of "the French rulers," of "persons exercising the government of France," etc. If they are serious in their intentions of making peace, they must hold a language more explicit. They have sent an ambassador (Lord Macartney) to the court of Louis XVIII. Do they imagine, after such an insult to the present government of France, that a negotiation can be entered upon without a previous and direct acknowledgment? That govern-

ment has been recognised in various acts, both by us and our allies; in the exchange of prisoners, the release of the princess royal, etc. There is no injury, therefore, but on the contrary much advantage to be derived from a more full and explicit recognition. At the peace of Utrecht, the negotiation and conferences at Gertruydenburg were injured by Louis XIV. employing an ambassador in the interest of the pretender: why, then, the Count d'Artois should now be so much countenanced by government as ambassador from an unfortunate prince I am at a loss to conceive. Is it not highly necessary, then, to make an explicit declaration that we are really desirous of a suitable and honourable peace? Let us, however, come to the point. Ministers say, all this is very good, if you let us do it; but if the House of Commons suggest it, it is very wrong. Do they think, however, that there is a cabinet in Europe, or even that there is a man who reads a newspaper, who believes, if the motion of my honourable friend were to be carried this evening, that it was forced upon administration? Nay, would he not rather think (if in decency I may be allowed to say so) that ministers had made the House of Commons adopt the motion? Allowing the right honourable gentleman all the confidence which he can desire, as much even as his right honourable friend beside him (Mr. Dundas) reposes in him, nothing could tend more to evince the confidence of the House in administration than the motion that has been made this evening. Even if it be the etiquette of the minister that all declarations of this nature shall originate in the crown (an etiquette which I do not understand), I would not put a declaration of the crown in comparison, in point of authenticity, with that which the present motion, if carried, would convey. Let him recollect that every moment of delay is a moment of danger, and therefore let him not procrastinate in making the declaration. He may, perhaps, have intended the speech of this evening to serve the purpose of a declaration; but he cannot but know the wide and immeasurable difference between a speech which may or may not go abroad in an accurate manner and a resolution inserted in the votes of the House of Commons.

I shall not say one word on the relative situation of Great Britain. I am not one of those who are inclined to think despondingly of the situation of the country. But if anything could make me despair, it would be that species of reasoning which, after telling me of the increased national debt, the load of taxes, and the consequent misery entailed upon the people,

desires me to look to the ruined finances of France for comfort, which are quickly hurrying that power to the precipice of destruction. So that, in proportion as the enemy retreats from the common abyss which would swallow up both, we are encouraged to be under no apprehension for our own safety. I will allow that the French may be in greater distress than the people of this country are at this time; but to me it appears to be very poor comfort to the afflicted to hear that their enemies will fall a little before them. Even supposing France to come and bow at our feet, supposing that Louis XVIII. were to be proclaimed rightful heir of the crown, and supposing that she were tamely to surrender all the conquests she has made, it would be no recompense for the loss that we have already sustained. According to the statement of the right honourable gentleman, the territorial rental of the kingdom does not exceed twenty-five millions annually. The taxes, if they turn out as productive as they have been estimated, will amount to twenty-one millions, which with the poor rates will make a sum equal to the whole landed rental. Now, though I am not one of those who with a late petitioner (Sir Francis Blake) think that land pays all the taxes, I think the weight of them lies upon the land, which cannot exist very easily under a burden of twenty shillings in the pound. I am told that things are worse in France; but will any man be bold enough not to wish for peace because the finances of France may be in a state still more deranged than ours? Rather than continue the war for another campaign, independent of the moral reasons against its prolongation, I would not unquestionably give up our honour, our dignity, or our liberty, which, till I die, I trust I shall never fail to assert; but I would give up all questions of etiquette and accommodation, and in fact everything short of what most nearly concerns our character. Let it not be understood that I wish for a dishonourable peace, or peace on any other terms than those which are suitable to the interests and consistent with the dignity of the country; but I am sanguine enough to think that even now this country may have fair and honourable terms of peace. The governors of France dare not refuse any reasonable terms which we may offer; if they do, others will then be appointed in their place who will dare to accept of them. When peace shall be proposed, however, I hope and trust that it will not be proposed on the dividing system, and that this country will never give its sanction to any such transaction as the infamous partition of

Poland. Dearly as I love peace, exclaimed Mr. Fox, and anxiously as I wish for it, that such a peace may never prevail I most heartily pray. I hope, when peace shall arrive, that the interests of humanity as well as of kings, and that of every particular state will be consulted, and that tranquillity will be re-established on the broad basis of justice, in answer to the prayers of mankind, who are now fatigued with war, slaughter, and devastation.

The House divided on Mr. Grey's motion:

	<i>Tellers</i>		<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS	{ Mr. Grey { Mr. Whitbread }	50.—	NOES	{ Mr. Steele { Mr. Adams }
				189.

## MR. FOX'S MOTION ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR WITH FRANCE

*May 10, 1796.*

IN pursuance of the notice he had given,

Mr. Fox rose and addressed the House to the following effect: It having fallen to my lot, Sir, both at the commencement and in the course of the present war, to trouble the House with several motions which have not been honoured with their concurrence, and having last session proposed an inquiry into the state of the nation to which the House did not think proper to assent, it may be thought by some, perhaps, to be rather presumption in me again to call their attention to the same subject. And I confess that if some events had not occurred during the last year rather singular in their nature I should have, however reluctantly, acquiesced in the former decisions of the House, after having entered my solemn protest against the plans that were adopted, and avowed my strong and complete disapprobation of the whole system of measures that has been pursued. There certainly, however, have happened, during the last year, some events which must, in no inconsiderable degree, have tended to alter the sentiments of those with whom I had the misfortune to differ, as well as to strengthen and confirm the former opinions of those with whom I have the honour to agree. The event of great importance, and to which I particularly allude, is the negotiation at Basle and the notice which has been given of the negotiation with foreign powers. As I shall have occasion to comment upon this transaction more fully hereafter, I shall only say at present that notwithstanding all the applauses that have been bestowed upon it, the result cannot fail to draw the attention of every thinking man to the present posture of public affairs; it must call the attention of every man who is not determined to act blindly (a description of persons of which I hope there are none in this House), to the situation of the country, and that line of conduct which the government ought to follow. For one thing that we have learned is, whether ministers have acted wisely or not (no matter which for our present purpose), that we have



no immediate prospect of peace. It signifies but little whether the obstacle may have arisen from the unreasonable demands of the enemy, or the mismanagement of his majesty's ministers; but of this we are assured, that we have no prospect of peace (an event much to be lamented, but more especially in the present circumstances of the country), and that it is not in the power of those who are entrusted with the administration of public affairs to obtain terms from the enemy which they dare to offer to the nation. Whatever may be our opinions of the causes which have led to this situation, we must all be agreed as to the effect; and none, I presume, will dispute that our situation is worse than it was at the period when, either by conquest or concession, we had a prospect of approaching peace.

Having stated this point, upon which there can be no difference of opinion, I shall go into a detail of those circumstances which, in my mind, have reduced us to the situation in which we are now placed.

I shall begin, Sir, with the opening of the budget in 1792, when a most splendid display of the situation of the country was given by the minister, without alluding to any prior or subsequent statement: and I take that day because it was a day on which his statement was more to his own satisfaction, and more to the satisfaction of the House, than at any other period. In the year 1792, three years after the French Revolution, the minister came forward with his boasted and triumphant description of the state of the country, of the prosperity of our commerce, of the improvement of our manufactures, of the extent of our revenue, and the prospect of permanent peace. He then admitted that fifteen years' peace was, perhaps, rather too much to expect, but he said that we had as rational hopes of the continuance of tranquillity as ever had existed in the history of modern times. Then—full two years and a half (I wish to speak within compass) after the first Revolution in France, after the time that the king had been compelled to return to Paris, that the National Assembly had annihilated the titles and destroyed the feudal tenures of the nobility; had confiscated the lands belonging to the church, banished part of the clergy, and compelled those who remained to take an oath contrary, in many instances, to the dictates of their conscience;—then, I say, it was that this prospect of fifteen years' peace was held out to the country. It was after the King of France had been made, as was said at the time, to stand in a splendid pillory, on the 14th July, that this expectation of

lasting tranquillity was raised. So that I have a right to conclude that in the opinion of the king's ministers the annihilation of the titles of the nobility, and the degradation of the order, the exile of the clergy, and the confiscation of the lands of the church; that the invasion of the royal prerogative, and the insults offered to the sovereign, described as they then were by their friends by the terms pillory and imprisonment (terms which I now repeat, not with any view of courting the favour of those who employed them, but merely to show the light in which those events were considered at the time), not only so little interfered with the system of neutrality which they had adopted, but were in so small a degree connected with the interests of the country as not to damp the prospect of peace, or even to render the duration of tranquillity for fifteen years very uncertain. I so far agree, therefore, with the opinion of ministers, that instead of the country being in danger from the French Revolution, there were no circumstances attending it which rendered the continuance of peace more uncertain than it was before it happened. It may be said that at that time France was professing pacific views. I have so often seen these professions made by the most ambitious powers, in the very moment when they were thirsting most for aggrandisement, that I repose little faith in them; so little, indeed, that I cannot believe that the pacific views of ministers were founded upon these professions which were made by the French. But at that very time France was either engaged in actual hostilities with Austria, or on the point of commencing hostilities. War was either begun, or there was a moral certainty that it would take place.

Without stopping to discuss a point (on which, however, I have no difficulty in my own mind), whether Austria or France was the aggressor, it was sufficient that ministers knew at the time that an aggression had been made on the part of one of those powers. And notwithstanding the defeats which attended the French arms at the outset, it was the general opinion that the Austrian territory was defenceless, and that it would soon be overrun by the enemy's arms. But even then a fifteen-years' peace was talked of. And I must here state a fact which, though not officially confirmed, rests upon the general belief of Europe, that before hostilities commenced between Austria and France, an insinuation, or rather a communication, was made by England to the latter power, that if they attempted any aggression upon the territories of Holland, which at that

time was our ally, we should be obliged to break the neutrality that we had observed, and interfere in the contest. This message has been differently interpreted. Some have put upon it the interpretation, which I think, upon the whole, is the fair one, that it was our policy to take all prudent means of avoiding any part in the war. Others, I know, have put upon it a more invidious construction, and insinuated that our meaning was neither more nor less than this, speaking to the French, "Take you Austria and do with it what you please, but we set up the limits of Holland, beyond which you shall not pass." I state this to show that at that time ministers did not foresee any probable event which might occasion a rupture between this country and France. That this also was the general opinion of the House in the spring of 1792, I need not spend time in convincing them. I shall, however, barely mention a circumstance of a financial nature, which happened near the close of the session, which proves the fact beyond dispute. I mean the measure of funding the 4 per cents. At that time the 3 per cent. consols had risen to 95, 96, and even to 97, and it was the opinion of the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer that they would rise to par; in this conviction, and with a view of a probable saving, he had lost the opportunity of a certain saving to the nation of a perpetual annuity of £240,000; a thing of such magnitude as to prove to the House that at that time the right honourable gentleman had no expectation that the peace was likely to be disturbed, since it induced him to forgo the great good which was in his power in the hope of the trifling addition that might have accrued on the event of the 3 per cents. rising to par. I mention this as a fact subsidiary to the declarations which the minister made at the commencement of that session, and which proved that to the end of it he continued to entertain the same confidence of peace.

Thus ended the session of 1792. In the course of the summer of that year various events of various kinds took place. The Revolution in France of the 10th of August chiefly deserves notice. I shall not now comment upon the nature of that Revolution, I shall speak of it merely as a member of the British legislature, and as an event connected with the interests of this country. The great alteration it had produced was the changing the government of France from a monarchy to a republic. I know that these are excellent words, and well adapted, as the history of our country has proved, for enlisting

men under opposite standards. But this is not the view in which that Revolution is to be considered as affecting the policy of this country. Let us in the first place consider its influence upon this country in the way of example, and the prevalence which it was likely to give to Jacobin principles throughout Europe. After this country had seen the order of the nobility destroyed and their titles abolished, when it had seen the system of equality carried to as great a length as it was possible to carry it, except in that one instance of the existence of a king, I ask those who are fondest of the name of monarchy (I beg not to be understood as speaking in the least disrespectfully of that form of government), whether there was anything in the monarchy of France previous to the 10th of August which tended to fortify the English monarchy? Whether there was anything in the subsequent Revolution which tended to render it less secure than it was immediately before that event happened, when no danger was apprehended? Whether there be a greater or a less prospect of peace between this country and France since the overthrow of the house of Bourbon than there was before? It is not my disposition to triumph over the distresses of a fallen family; but, considering them as kings of France, as trustees for the happiness of a great nation, and remembering at the same time my old English prejudices, and I may further add, old English history, can I regret that expulsion as an event unfavourable to the happiness of the people of France, or injurious to the tranquillity of Great Britain? No man who thinks that the former wars of this country against France were just and necessary can refuse to say that they were provoked by the restless ambition of the house of Bourbon. And can it then be said that the overthrow of that monarchy was either a cause of alarm or a symptom of danger to Great Britain?

Lest, however, I should be thought by some to approve more of the conduct of ministers than I really do, I here find it necessary to say a few words by way of explanation. I approve of their sentiments in 1792 in as far as they thought that the French Revolution did not afford a sufficient cause for this country involving itself in a war, and I approve of their conduct in as far as it proceeded upon a determination to adhere to an invariable line of neutrality, provided universal tranquillity could not be preserved. I differ, however, with them upon the means of preserving that neutrality. I think there was a time before the war broke out with Austria, which presented an

opportunity for this country to exercise the great and dignified office of a mediator, which would not only have been highly honourable to herself and beneficial to Europe, but an office which she was in some measure called upon to undertake by the events of the preceding year. The event to which I particularly refer was the treaty of Pilnitz, by which Russia and Prussia avowed their intention of interfering in the internal affairs of France, if they should be supported by the other powers of Europe, which certainly was to all intents and purposes an aggression against France. The circumstances of the transaction, still more than the transaction itself, pointed out the propriety of this mediation on the part of Great Britain. This treaty, I really believe, was never intended to be acted upon; but this certainly does not lessen the aggression, much less the insult which it carried to France. The emperor at that time was importuned by the emigrant nobility and clergy to interfere in the domestic affairs of France. Austria did not dare to interfere without the co-operation of Prussia, and Prussia did not wish to hazard the fate of such an enterprise. When those powers were in this state of uncertainty, that was the very moment for England to become a mediator; and if this country had at that time proposed fair terms of accommodation to the parties, the matter might have been compromised and the peace of Europe preserved, at least for some time; for, God knows, the period of peace is at all times uncertain! If England had then stepped forward as a mediator, the questions to be agitated would have related solely to Lorraine and Alsace. And is there any man who believes, putting out of the question the internal affairs of France altogether, that under the impartial mediation of this country all the difficulties respecting the tenures of the nobility, and the right of the chapters in those two provinces, might not have been easily settled to the satisfaction of the disputants? I cannot conceive that ministers, in concerting their schemes and adopting the measures which they have pursued, could be influenced by any secret principle so depraved and truly impolitic as to be induced to contemplate with satisfaction the growing seeds of discord under the idea that this country would flourish whilst the other powers of Europe were exhausting themselves in contention and war. Neutrality I admit to have been preferable to an active share in the contest; but to a nation like Great Britain, whose prosperity depends upon her commerce, the general tranquillity of Europe is a far greater blessing (laying the general interests

of mankind out of the question) than any partial neutrality which it could preserve. I hope, therefore, that it was upon no such contracted views that ministers declined the office of mediators at the period to which I allude. One would think, however, that after refusing such interference, they would have been the last men in the world to intermeddle with the internal government of another country.

Having proved that the event of the 10th of August made no difference in our relative situation, I trust it is not necessary for me to refer to the horrible scenes that were disclosed in France in the month of September. I merely mention them that it may not be said that I wished to pass them over in silence, or without expressing those feelings which in common with all mankind I experienced on hearing of atrocities which have excited the indignation of Europe. However monstrous they have been, they seem, notwithstanding, to have no relation to the present question; they have no small resemblance, at the same time, to the massacres in Paris in former periods; massacres in which Great Britain was much more nearly affected than by the events of the month of September 1792, but in which she nevertheless did not interfere; a conduct the propriety of which it fell to the province of the historian to discuss; and to historians alone must the massacre of September 1792 be also left; for though individual members might think them a fit topic with which to inflame the rage of mankind, ministers never contended that they were a legitimate cause of war.

We now come to that important event, the successful invasion of the Austrian Netherlands by the French under General Dumourier. How far it would have been wise in this country to have permitted France to remain in possession of this key to Holland I shall not now argue. But what happened in October was apprehended in April; and if it is once admitted as a principle that it would have been impossible for this country to have allowed France the quiet possession of this territory, would it not have been wise in this country to have prevented the invasion by a mediation between the two powers? Perhaps it may be said that they trusted that the great military power of Austria would be able, if not to resist the invasion in the first instance, at least to compel them to retire. If this was the policy with which they acted, it certainly was a policy more than ordinarily shallow. It would have been, perhaps, in this, as in every instance of a similar nature, more wise to adopt a

resolution at the outset, and to act upon it with uniformity, firmness, and consistency. Supposing France to be successful, did you expect to strike in at the end of the war, and speak to France as you did in the case of Russia and the Porte, when you vauntingly said to Russia, You shall not keep Oczakow as an indemnity for the expenses of the war? What was the consequence, however, when you came forward in this arrogant and imperious tone? You were not seconded by the country; you were condemned, as assuming haughty and unwarrantable pretensions, by every impartial man in Europe; and in the end you were obliged to send a minister to Petersburg to renounce everything that you had said. Had you pursued the same conduct in respect to France, you would have been reduced to the same dilemma. The more the aggrandisement of France was to be dreaded, the stronger motives we had to exercise the office of a mediator before the war commenced. Shortly afterwards Lord Gower was recalled from Paris; a circumstance which I always lamented, because from that moment the continuance of peace between the countries became more doubtful. And this brings me to the immediate causes of the war.

The immediate causes of the war have generally been reduced to three: First, the way in which certain individuals belonging to the Corresponding Society in this country were received by the government of France; secondly, the decree of the 19th of November; and, thirdly, the claims which were set up against the monopoly held by the Dutch of the navigation of the Scheldt. The first appears to me to be so insignificant as not to be worthy of a serious answer. In the first place, in order to give it shape, in order to make it fit for being put down upon paper, you must begin with assuming that there was a government in France to whom you might complain, and from whom you might demand redress. But was there ever any complaint made, or any dissatisfaction stated? Respecting the decree of the 19th of November, did you ever complain of it? Did you ever demand that it should be either revoked or explained? This is a circumstance so intimately connected with the existence of a government in France, that I know not how to separate them. You refused to recognise the government of France, and from that very moment all the means of conciliation and explanation were at an end. Things were then brought to the *ultima ratio regum*; for the moment that you cut off all means of explanation, you virtually made a declaration of war. But though you arrogantly and unwisely refused to

recognise the government of France, you allowed M. Chauvelin to remain here, and from the papers which passed between him and the king's ministers at the time, the French seem to have shown a strong disposition to explain that decree. Why then, it will be asked, did they not explain it? Because they did not know what explanation would be satisfactory. But it is admitted by all the writers on the law of nations that I have read, that an insult, or even an aggression, is not sufficient cause of war till explanation or redress is demanded and refused, and that the party who refuses an opportunity of explanation to the other is the aggressor. This opportunity, however, was denied to the French; and upon these principles England was the aggressor. With respect to the opening of the Scheldt, is there any man who does not believe, if a negotiation had been then attempted, that matters might not have been arranged to the mutual satisfaction of the parties? This was even admitted by the House. For what was the favourite argument at the time? "England is the last power in Europe upon whom the French will make war; but after devouring the rest of Europe, they will swallow you up at last." Upon this part of the argument I am a good deal relieved by subsequent events. And here I am sorry to allude to the opinions of a gentleman (Mr. Burke) who is no longer a member of this House, but, from the part he took in the politics of the country at the time, and the effect which his eloquence produced, I find it impossible to speak of the history of the times without saying something on the doctrines and sentiments of that able and respectable man. In a most masterly performance he has charmed all the world with the brilliancy of his genius, fascinated the country with the powers of his eloquence, and, in as far as that cause went to produce this effect, plunged the country into all the calamities consequent upon war. I admire the genius of the man, and I admit the integrity and usefulness of his long public life; I cannot, however, but lament that his talents, when, in my opinion, they were directed most beneficially to the interest of his country, produced very little effect, and that when he espoused sentiments different from those which I hold to be wise and expedient, then his exertions should have been crowned with a success that I deplore. Never, certainly, was there a nation more dazzled than the people of this country were by the brilliancy of this performance of Mr. Burke! Much of the lustre of his opponents, as well as of friends, was drawn from the imitation of this dazzling orb;



but it was the brilliancy of a fatal constellation, which bore terror and desolation in its train; and we are to this day suffering its baneful effects. This able man had no bounds in his opposition to my proposition for recognising the government of France. It was represented as a proposition to petition France for peace by throwing ourselves at her feet, to surrender our beloved sovereign's head to the block: in fine, entirely to give up the constitution. And why? Because it was to treat with regicides, though the unfortunate event (for such I shall always call it) of the death of the King of France had not as yet taken place. When the question comes to be reconsidered, I am confident that the country will not be of this opinion. At present I have even ministers themselves as accessaries to the fact after it has actually happened. By this petition or message to the directory have they not acknowledged the power of those very men who pride themselves upon the part they took in promoting that unfortunate event, and who now celebrate it by an anniversary festival? For what purpose do I mention this but to show that I did not wish to surrender the constitution, which has been handed down to us from our ancestors, cemented with their blood, and that it was no part of my design to bring the head of our beloved sovereign to the block?

But to return to the opening of the Scheldt. I am not one of those who conceive the navigation of the Scheldt to be of no importance to Holland; in its present circumstances, I think it was of very little importance. It may be asked, however, Are you to judge what is and what is not for the interest of Holland? Are not the Dutch much better judges of what is for their interest than you are? Far, far better certainly, is my answer. But did the Dutch themselves at the time think it an object worth disputing about, or rather did not we drag them reluctantly into the contest? A variety of other arguments were used at the time. I do not wish to recall the language of any particular gentleman to the recollection of the House; but the argument being adduced against a proposition which I had the honour to make, I have more particular reason to remember it. I was told that we ought not to recognise the French republic for fear of disgusting our allies. Let us inquire, then, who were our allies at the time? The States General were among the number. Then it was said that even those who were disaffected to the interest of the stadtholder were so aristocratic in their sentiments that they would spurn with indignation at French principles, and that an invasion would

heal all the internal divisions which subsisted in that republic. Notwithstanding these assertions, however, I have heard, and I know it is commonly believed, that Holland was not conquered by the arms of France, but by the disaffection of the Dutch to the cause in which they were engaged. Our other allies were Austria and Prussia. Whether the King of Prussia has acted to this country with fidelity and honour, or with falsehood and perfidy; whether he has performed his engagements, or whether he has violated the faith of the treaty, we have never been informed by ministers; but this I will ask, whether after granting him an enormous subsidy, a subsidy which must be regarded as most extravagant when compared with the amount of the services which he has performed; whether, if you had thought proper to recognise the French republic before you entered into the war, he would have deserted you one day sooner, or swallowed up more of the treasure of the country than he has done? With respect to Austria, is there any man who seriously believes that, though we had recognised the French republic, we might not have availed ourselves as much as we can do at this moment of the service of that power? Even if Austria had been disgusted, all that she could have done would have been to make a separate peace, which would have probably been the means of restoring general tranquillity, because that must have happened before we engaged in the war. But if this danger would have attended the recognition of the French republic before, may not the effect be produced by the late negotiation at Basle, in which Austria was not a party? It was argued that a recognition implied an approbation of everything that had passed. But this I denied when the objection was taken, and still persist in denying. On the question of who was the aggressor, I contend that by the law of nations, as it is explained by the best writers upon the subject, we were the aggressors, because we refused to give to France an opportunity of redressing those grievances of which we complained.

I now come to the period at which we began to take an active part in the contest. When our armies first appeared in the field, the enemy were forced to retire from the territories which they had occupied; they were completely driven out of the Netherlands, and we were in possession of almost all French Flanders. At this period it was reported that a person of the name of Maret made proposals for peace, on the part of the French, which were not listened to by his majesty's ministers. Why, then, I ask, did you not make peace at this

prosperous juncture? when the enemy were defeated in every battle, when they were driven from the frontiers of our allies which they had occupied; when we had made a considerable impression upon French Flanders; when, excepting Savoy, they had not one foot of land belonging to our allies, and when they might have been disposed to purchase terms of peace by a considerable sacrifice of territory. Why did we not make peace in these circumstances? Why, because the system on which ministers had set out was deserted; because you no longer confined your views to the security of your allies, but, infatuated with success, you began to seek for indemnity. The declining to negotiate at this period I set down as a principal cause of all our succeeding calamities.

I cannot help remarking that there has been a good deal of inconsistency in the mode of arguing adopted by those who have been adverse to negotiation. When the French were successful, I was asked—What! would you humble the country so far as to beg peace from the enemy in the moment of her victories? And when the allies were successful in their turn, I was told that we must not treat at a time when our armies were everywhere triumphant, and when nothing but disgrace and defeat marked the progress of the enemy; that then was the period to avail ourselves of our good fortune and reap the fruits of our victories. It was even at one time thought advisable to push our victories so far as to march to Paris. Upon the project of effecting a counter-revolution in France, having said so much on former occasions, I shall not enlarge now. The great defect in the management of the war, however, has, in my opinion, been the want of a determinate object for which you have been contending. You have neither carried on war for the purpose of restoring monarchy in France, nor with a view to your own advantage. While the emperor in Alsace was taking towns in the name of the King of Hungary, you were taking Valenciennes for the emperor—proclaiming the constitution of 1791 at Toulon—and taking possession of Martinique for the King of Great Britain. What has been the consequence of this want of object? You have converted France into an armed nation—you have given to her rulers the means of marshalling all the strength of the kingdom against you. The royalists in France, also, so little understood your intentions, that they did not join you; and the reason is obvious—they did not know whether you were at war for the purpose of re-establishing the ancient monarchy of France, or for the

purpose of aggrandising yourselves by robbing France of her territories. It might then have been imagined that we should have endeavoured to conciliate the body of constitutionalists. No such thing. We had acted so as to give the impression that we were desirous to show our enmity towards that body of men. The unfortunate De la Fayette, who deserved the praise of being a man of the most uncorrupted nature, who had the merit of steering between the two extremes of the parties that agitated this country; this firm, brave, and steady friend of his sovereign, this gallant and distinguished gentleman, equally the friend of his king and his country, emigrated after the 10th of August. Upon neutral ground he was seized by certain robbers in the service of the King of Prussia; he was kept by that monarch for years in prisons and dungeons.—It might have been thought, if you had been desirous to conciliate this body of men, whose constitution you announced at Toulon, that you would at least have made a point of procuring the enlargement of this estimable character. It might have been thought that, in return for an enormous subsidy, the King of Prussia could not hesitate at the enlargement of one prisoner. But when a motion on the subject was made by my right honourable friend (General Fitzpatrick) it was said that it was impossible for this government to interfere. He is delivered from the King of Prussia, on his recognition of the French, to the emperor, because he said he belonged to the allies generally, and by him he is kept in the same scandalous and inhuman bondage. From this dreadful captivity he endeavours to escape—a circumstance not very surprising—he is taken and sent back to his prison, to experience more rigorous treatment. At length Madame de la Fayette, after enduring a series of most dreadful sufferings under the brutal Robespierre, from which she escaped by miracle, flew, on the wings of duty and affection, to Vienna, to solicit the emperor for permission to give to her husband the consolation of her attentions in his prison. The emperor granted her request. But on her arrival at Olmütz, the officer who had the care of M. de la Fayette told her with openness and candour that if she resolved to go down to the dungeon to her husband, she must submit to share in all the horrors of his captivity. [A burst of indignation and sorrow broke from every part of the House.] This, however, had no terrors for her affectionate heart; she plunged into his dungeon, and there they remain together, the living, and yet buried, victims of this inhuman power. Nay, this is not all; she applied for leave

to have a female attendant, instead of a male, about her person; this, she said, even the implacable Robespierre had not denied her; but even this request was brutally refused! As if it were not enough that our ministers had not interfered for the deliverance of this gentleman, and for fear that it should be misunderstood that they did not participate in the measure, M. Alexander Lameth, one of the persons who retired from France along with De la Fayette, had, after a most cruel confinement, come to this country to take the benefit of the Bath waters. He had also been confined in the prisons of Prussia, but his health having fallen a sacrifice, the king yielded to the solicitation of his mother, and had permitted him to have a certain period of relaxation, and, having afterwards made his separate peace with France, was easily persuaded to give him liberty. This gentleman, then, who had so greatly distinguished himself as the friend of his king and country, who had only been desirous to establish a limited monarchy, and who had fallen a sacrifice in his native land to his endeavours to prevent the violence and injustice which have unhappily been committed, sought to re-establish his health in this country. He had not been here a single fortnight, the greatest part of which he spent in his bed, before he was ordered to quit the kingdom; and to every representation of the alarming state of his health, and the impropriety of his being put on board any other than a neutral vessel, very little attention was paid, and he was hurried away, at the hazard of his being carried into Calais and conducted to the guillotine. What could be more injurious to the country than such conduct? Any person who had seen M. Lameth with his broken and decayed constitution would not have conceived that he was in a state to be dangerous to the government. Good God! (exclaimed Mr. Fox) M. Lameth an object of terror to the British government! An object of terror no otherwise than of moral terror, which his sufferings might excite, as exhibiting a dreadful example of the justice of what are termed "regular governments," of the implacable temper of political animosity, and of that severe vengeance which jealousy and offended power exercise on their unresisting victims! And thus this gentleman, who had justly rendered himself dear to all who love rational liberty, and to whom the emigrant nobility of France owed such obligations, was driven from England.

Thus it appears that it is not to loyalists of every description that favour is to be shown; it is not to those who take

up arms in favour of the limited monarchy, which it was the pretended object of the allies, and of this country in particular, to establish, but to those only whose endeavours aim at the restoration of the ancient tyranny, who are the friends of the old feudal system. They, it seems, are the only royalists whose loyalty is entitled to support. With respect to the treatment of General Dumourier, though I do not mean to place him exactly in the same point of view as the two gentlemen I have just mentioned, yet the behaviour of the allies towards him has not been less impolitic; for, certainly, to afford an asylum and offer our protection to those men who, disgusted with the party whom they served, withdrew their assistance, was the only effectual way to encourage others to follow their example. It is said that the legitimate object of Great Britain in this war was to obtain from France a just and honourable peace, and that this was also the object of the allies. Why, then, was not that object attempted when the confederacy existed in its full power? Why were two of the powers, Prussia and Spain, suffered to melt away, and their aid to be withdrawn from the general cause, without making any overtures for such a peace? You may say it was not your fault, that you could not foresee their secession; let me, however, observe that when statesmen take upon themselves to form alliances with other powers, they should know something of the characters of the princes with whom they make such alliances, and how far it is probable they will keep to the letter of their engagements. As to the King of Prussia, there was every reason to suppose, long before the event took place, that he would make peace with France; that it was his interest so to do: and with respect to Spain, it was apparent to the most short-sighted statesman that her ministers could not protract the conclusion of a peace with the victorious republic without endangering the existence of the Spanish monarchy itself. It was, therefore, an incumbent duty on ministers to have foreseen the probable consequences of their alliances: if they had possessed any of that necessary foresight, they would, during the last session of parliament, have used their endeavours to have procured a peace while the confederacy was acting in concert, and not have waited till it was dissolved.

It is alleged that the form of government in France was not such as to enable ministers to treat for peace upon any sure foundation. I, however, am one of those who think that the government, so far as respected external relations, was

of no consequence to the contracting parties. If an absolute government is, as it is thought to be, the best to enter into engagements with, surely no one will deny but France was an absolute government during the tyranny of Robespierre, as well as during the reign of the prior and succeeding factions. The acts of those factions were never afterwards revised with respect to external relations. But, you say, you must wait till there is a regular constitution established. Is that the most proper time to retrieve your losses by negotiation, when they have settled themselves in a permanent government, ascertained the limits and boundaries of their conquests, made the whole subject to their general laws, and communicated to what was your territory every inherent quality of their own departments? We were told, several years ago, that the French were reduced to such extremity that they could not possibly find resources to enable them to continue the contest much longer; and only last session it was asserted, with the utmost degree of confidence, that they were not upon the verge, but in the actual gulf of bankruptcy—that they were in the last agony. A twelvemonth has now elapsed since they have been in that agony; and really it is the first time I ever heard of any set of people continuing so long in such a situation. I certainly must admit that last year, while France was labouring under this agony, the emperor, with the assistance of this country, was enabled to regain part of his dominions which had been wrested from him, and this was looked upon as an accomplishment of the prediction that the French were reduced to the last extremity, and that they were not in a capacity ever to recover themselves. It might naturally have been expected that death would have been the consequence of this agony; but was that the case? Far from it. The events of the last three weeks have been of a nature sufficient to prove that their agonising struggles may in the end destroy their enemies, and draw them into that gulf of ruin in which they had flattered themselves the French would have been irrevocably buried.

The state of the French finances has been another argument to prove their inability to continue the war. God forbid that the finances of this country should ever be so involved! But the French have now got over the worst consequences resulting from the state of their finances. France has been placed in that situation wherein it has been necessary to call forth all the property of the country in order to maintain the quarrel. Without recurring to the mode of argument which was made

use of yesterday with respect to the new mode of taxing capital, I hope, if ever we should be in the situation of the French, that we shall not hesitate to expend the whole capital of the country rather than have a constitution imposed upon us by a foreign enemy. I had rather that all should be taken away by the calamities of the present war; I had rather that we should be forced to submit to one, two, three, or four requisitions of all the adults in the kingdom; all this I would rather submit to, than that the country should experience the misery of absolute servitude. You have reduced France to the situation of absolute bankruptcy; but that bankruptcy is past, and now they have the whole resources of the country to bring forth against you. It is now twelve months since we conceived them in such a state of bankruptcy as to be incapable of resistance. It was the boast of Austria that she had recovered her losses;<sup>9</sup> but we see the campaign open this year with such gigantic efforts on the part of the French as to leave no room to hope that we can ever be able to resist them.

At the commencement of the present session, his majesty, in his speech from the throne, intimated a disposition to negotiate, and had more fully manifested that disposition in his message of the 8th of December. Why did not ministers make the attempt at that time, which was peculiarly favourable for such a measure, as the campaign could not well be opened for some months? Instead of this, we find that the first step taken was on the 8th of March, three months after the communication of the earnest desire for peace contained in the king's message; and four months after the same sentiments had been avowed in his speech from the throne. This delay has not been occasioned by a wish to consult with our allies and obtain their concurrence, for it does not appear that they either sanctioned or disapproved it. An allusion was made to them in Mr. Wickham's letter; but in order to justify the delay, the application should have been made in the name of them all, and some specific terms should have been offered. This was not the case. Mr. Wickham's letter was such as might have been agreed upon in a quarter of an hour, instead of three months. But this letter, after all, expressed nothing more than was contained in the king's speech, and cannot be produced as a new proof of the desire of ministers for peace.

It has been said in this House, and his majesty's ministers have particularly supported the opinion, that the contagion of French principles is highly dangerous to this country. Those



principles and their supporters in France have been treated in this House with every mark of insult and contempt, with every expression of disgrace and detestation. The first thing ministers should have done was to remove the unfavourable impression, the hostile disposition which their language and conduct must have created; and the first step towards accomplishing this was a full and unequivocal recognition of the French republic. Towards the conclusion of the American war, some gentlemen in this House thought an acknowledgment of the independence of America should be made the price of peace. I always thought otherwise, and that it ought to be made freely and gratuitously. But whether I was right or not, the present is a question materially different. We have no claim on France like that which we had on America, and therefore the less would have been the sacrifice in recognising the republic. But so far from doing this, Mr. Wickham's note does not even hint at the terms that would be acceptable. This reserve may in some cases be prudent and wise. In the present case I see neither prudence nor wisdom. Instead of either recognition or offers, you tell the directory that your minister is not empowered even to negotiate. To argue this point fairly, I must put myself in the situation of the enemy, and here I must ask, What could I think of such a communication from ministers, who for several years have traduced the principles and governments in France, and reviled all the ruling men in that country; from ministers who delayed that communication for three months? I could not believe the sincerity of their offers.

The change of feeling towards the French must have been very sudden in the right honourable gentleman; for at the time he was making pacific professions he was sending an expedition to the coast of France, which if it had succeeded would have compelled him to declare Louis XVIII. king. Had the island of Noirmoutier been taken in the name of Louis XVIII., in whose name it was summoned by a British officer, how could ministers have recognised the republic? It appears, then, that their conversion is very sudden, and sudden conversions are most suspicious. It is but too manifest that they never were sincerely desirous of negotiating a peace with the French republic. They might, indeed, draw up a paper with the ingenuity of special pleaders, that might serve as a declaration in a court of law, but which from its ambiguous mode of expression could not satisfy a more liberal judgment of the sincerity of their wishes for peace. I do not wish to visit

the sins of the father upon the son; I do not wish that the descendants of the house of Bourbon should be treated in the manner in which they treated the unfortunate house of Stuart; but if your pacific offers were sincere, you should have disowned Louis XVIII. as King of France. You should have recalled Lord Macartney, who was sent as ambassador to him, and avowed that you made war on France as a republic, and consequently that you recognised it as such. It would have been a becoming act of justice in you to have declared this to Louis XVIII.; and it would have been an act of prudence to yourselves, with a view of convincing the directory of the sincerity of the change in your sentiments; it would have freed the unfortunate emigrants from all further suspense respecting their fate, and would have convinced the French government of your actual solicitude for peace.

And here I must beg pardon of the House for entering into a short digression on the double-dealing that has been used towards the unfortunate emigrants from France, and observe that it is a most consoling circumstance to me that not one of them owes the smallest atom of his misfortunes to anything I ever did or said. It was natural that those unhappy men, when they heard that the estates of Englishmen were insecure unless the estates of the emigrants were restored; when they heard that we could not make peace with the republicans without laying the head of our sovereign on the block; when they heard that Great Britain was fighting for her very existence; it was natural for them to say, We may safely risk ourselves in the same bark that carries Cæsar; we may venture our fortunes along with that of the British empire. With these opinions, which they imbibed from speeches delivered in this House, the royalists had been drawn from all parts of France, fully persuaded that they would be cordially received here. But how have they been duped with ambiguous declarations, made purposely to deceive them into an idea that they were to fight for the restoration of the French monarchy, and of their own property; when, in fact, they were only set on to fight for the fluctuating views of ministers, who never regarded their personal welfare, or the cause they wished to support, as an object of real importance! In this manner many of the emigrants have been seduced to their ruin, and it would be but an act of justice to tell them we are not now fighting for the restoration of the French monarchy, we are not now fighting for the restoration of your property—our only object now is to

regain the territories we have lost—we are fighting only about the conditions of peace. The question now is, whether ministers have really changed their sentiments respecting the origin and objects of the war. If they have, they should prove it by some unequivocal act or declaration. If they have not, as I suspect is the case, then this House should entreat his majesty to change his councils. I know it will be said, “What! you have been speaking three hours, and all for the purpose of procuring a change of ministers, because such a change might be advantageous to yourself.” To this I can only answer that I never will take a part in the government till the principles upon which the present war has been made, till the principles upon which our domestic politics have been conducted during its continuance, have been completely renounced and abandoned; for it is to them that we must trace the source of all the evils with which we are now afflicted. No minister who commenced and carried on a war ever made an advantageous peace; but if the present ministers expect to prove an exception to this rule, they should show that they are seriously convinced of their past errors; they should renounce the principles on which they have acted, before they can hope to put an end, with safety and honour, to a war which they have conducted with so much rancour and with so little success.

We have, Sir, completely failed in all the objects for which the war was commenced. Holland is lost, the King of France exiled, and the aggrandisement and power of the French republic is more alarming than ever. Of our allies, the King of Prussia, who was the first to treat with the French, has sustained the least injury; the King of Spain has been forced to make peace in order to save his dominions; and the King of Sardinia is now in the same predicament, compelled, for his own safety, to accept such terms as the directory may choose to grant. The fate of this monarch, whose good faith was so loudly extolled in a late debate, who was termed the very pattern of fidelity, most forcibly and unequivocally demonstrates that in proportion as every ally of this country, in the present contest, has been a pattern of fidelity, he has also been an example of misfortune. The Empress of Russia has indeed suffered nothing. It is impossible not to see that her only object in the alliance was to plunder Poland, in which she has been collaterally supported by England. This is a mortal blow to another professed object of the war, the balance of power. Will any man believe that the avowed object of the

partition, the destruction of Jacobinism in Poland, was the real cause of dividing that unfortunate country? And will any man contend that England and France united might not have prevented that transaction, and by that means preserved the balance of power in Europe? But Poland was abandoned to its fate, suffered to be sacrificed, annihilated, destroyed, for the sake of those absurd and vicious principles which govern the policy of ministers, and which have involved us in the present war. These principles must now be deserted. If the country is to be saved, we must retrace our steps; that is the only course which presents any hope of an effectual cure for the evil. All other remedies are mere palliatives, which must rather prove mischievous than useful. What I recommend, therefore, is a complete change of system. Mr. Fox concluded a speech which lasted nearly four hours by moving,

“ That an humble address be presented to his majesty, most humbly to offer to his royal consideration that judgment which his faithful Commons have formed, and now deem it their duty to declare, concerning the conduct of his ministers in the commencement, and during the progress, of the present unfortunate war. As long as it was possible for us to doubt from what source the national distresses had arisen, we have, in times of difficulty and peril, thought ourselves bound to strengthen his majesty's government, for the protection of his subjects, by our confidence and support: but our duties, as his majesty's counsellors, and as the representatives of his people, will no longer permit us to dissemble our deliberate and determined opinion that the distress, difficulty, and peril to which this country is now subjected have arisen from the misconduct of the king's ministers; and are likely to subsist, and to increase, as long as the same principles which have hitherto guided these ministers shall continue to prevail in the counsels of Great Britain.

“ It is painful to us to remind his majesty of the situation of his dominions at the beginning of this war, and of the high degree of prosperity to which the skill and industry of his subjects had, under the safeguard of a free constitution, raised the British empire, since it can only fill his mind with the melancholy recollection of prosperity abused, and of opportunities of securing permanent advantages wantonly rejected. Nor shall we presume to wound his majesty's benevolence by dwelling on the fortunate consequences which might have arisen from the mediation of Great Britain between the powers then at war, which might have ensured the permanence of our prosperity while it preserved all Europe from the calamities which it has since endured; a mediation which this kingdom was so well fitted to carry on with vigour and dignity by its power, its character, and the nature of its government, happily removed at an equal distance from the contending extremes of licentiousness and tyranny.

" From this neutral and impartial system of policy his majesty's ministers were induced to depart by certain measures of the French government, of which they complained as injurious and hostile to this country. With what justice these complaints were made we are not now called upon to determine, since it cannot be pretended that the measures of France were of such a nature as to preclude the possibility of adjustment by negotiation; and it is impossible to deny that the power which shuts up the channel of accommodation must ever be the real aggressor in war. To reject negotiation is to determine on hostilities; and whatever may have been the nature of the points in question between us and France, we cannot but pronounce the refusal of such an authorised communication with that country, as might have amicably terminated the dispute, to be the true and immediate cause of the rupture which followed. Nor can we forbear to remark that the pretences, under which his majesty's ministers then haughtily refused such authorised communication, have been sufficiently exposed, by their own conduct, in since submitting to a similar intercourse with the same government.

" The misguided policy, which thus rendered the war inevitable, appears to have actuated the ministers in their determination to continue it at all hazards. At the same time we cannot but observe that the obstinacy with which they have adhered to their desperate system is not more remarkable than their versatility in the pretexts upon which they have justified it. At one period the strength, at another the weakness, of the enemy have been urged as motives for continuing the war: the successes as well as defeats of the allies have contributed only to prolong the contest; and hope and despair have equally served to involve us still deeper in the horrors of war, and to entail upon us an endless train of calamities.

" After the original, professed, objects had been obtained, by the expulsion of the French armies from the territories of Holland and the Austrian Netherlands, we find his majesty's ministers influenced either by arrogance or by infatuated ambition and vain hope of conquests, which, if realised, could never compensate to the nation for the blood and treasure by which they must be obtained: rejecting unheard the overtures made by the executive council of France, at a period when the circumstances were so eminently favourable to his majesty and his allies that there is every reason to suppose that a negotiation, commenced at such a juncture, must have terminated in an honourable and advantageous peace. To the prospects arising from such an opportunity they preferred a blind and obstinate perseverance in a war which could scarce have any remaining object but the unjustifiable purpose of imposing upon France a government disapproved of by the inhabitants of that country. And such was the infatuation of these ministers, that, far from being able to frame a wise and comprehensive system of policy, they even rejected the few advantages that belonged to their own unfortunate scheme. The general existence of a design to interpose in the internal government of France was too manifest not to rouse into active hostility the national zeal of that people; but their particular projects were too equivocal to attract the confidence, or procure the co-operation, of those Frenchmen who were

disaffected to the then government of their country. The nature of these plans was too clear not to provoke formidable enemies, but their extent was too ambiguous to conciliate useful friends.

"We beg leave further to represent to your majesty that at subsequent periods your ministers have suffered the most favourable opportunities to escape of obtaining an honourable and advantageous pacification: they did not avail themselves, as it was their duty to have done, of the unbroken strength of the great confederacy which had been formed against France, for the purpose of giving effect to overtures for negotiation: they saw the secession of several powerful states from that confederacy; they suffered it to dissolve without an effort for the attainment of a general pacification: they loaded their country with the odium of having engaged with the most questionable views, without availing themselves of that combination for procuring favourable conditions of peace. That, from this fatal neglect, the progress of hostilities has only served to establish the evils which might certainly have been avoided by negotiation, but which are now confirmed by the events of the war. We have felt that the unjustifiable and impracticable attempts to establish royalty in France by force has only proved fatal to its unfortunate supporters. We have seen, with regret, the subjugation of Holland and the aggrandisement of the French republic; and we have to lament the alteration in the state of Europe, not only from the successes of the French, but from the formidable acquisition of some of the allied powers on the side of Poland; acquisitions alarming from their magnitude, but still more so from the manner in which they have been made: so fatally has this war operated to destroy, in every part of Europe, that balance of power for the support of which it was undertaken, and to extend those evils which it was its professed object to avert.

"Most cordially, therefore, did we assure his majesty that his faithful Commons heard with the sincerest satisfaction his majesty's most gracious message of the 8th of December, wherein his majesty acquaints them that the crisis, which was depending at the commencement of the present session, had led to such an order of things as would induce his majesty to meet any disposition to negotiation, on the part of the enemy, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, and to conclude a general treaty of peace whenever it could be effected on just and suitable terms for himself and his allies. That from this gracious communication they were led to hope for a speedy termination to this most disastrous contest; but that, with surprise and sorrow, they have now reason to apprehend that three months were suffered to elapse before any steps were taken towards a negotiation, or any overtures made by his majesty's servants.

"With equal surprise and concern they have observed, when a fair and open conduct was so peculiarly incumbent on his majesty's ministers, considering the prejudices and suspicions which their previous conduct must have excited in the minds of the French, that, instead of acting in that open and manly manner which became the wisdom, the character, and dignity, of the British nation they adopted a mode of proceeding calculated rather to excite

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suspicion than to inspire confidence in the enemy. Every expression which might be construed into an acknowledgment of the French republic, or even an allusion to its forms, was studiously avoided; and the minister through whom this overture was made was, in a most unprecedented manner, instructed to declare that he had no authority to enter into any negotiation or discussion relative to the objects of the proposed treaty.

"That it is with pain we reflect that the alacrity of his majesty's ministers in apparently breaking off this negotiation, as well as the strange and unusual manner in which it was announced to the ministers of the various powers of Europe, affords a very unfavourable comment on their reluctance in entering upon it, and is calculated to make the most injurious impression respecting their sincerity on the people of France.

"On a review of so many instances of gross and flagrant misconduct, proceeding from the same pernicious principles, and directed with incorrigible obstinacy to the same mischievous ends, we deem ourselves bound in duty to his majesty, and to our constituents, to declare that we see no rational hope of redeeming the affairs of the kingdom but by the adoption of a system radically and fundamentally different from that which has produced our present calamities.

"Until his majesty's ministers shall, from a real conviction of past errors, appear inclined to regulate their conduct upon such a system, we can neither give any credit to the sincerity of their professions of a wish for peace, nor repose any confidence in their capacity for conducting a negotiation to a prosperous issue. Odious as they are to an enemy, who must still believe them secretly to cherish those unprincipled and chimerical projects, which they have been compelled in public to disavow, contemptible in the eyes of all Europe, from the display of insincerity and incapacity which has marked their conduct, our only hopes rest on his majesty's royal wisdom and unquestioned affection for his people, that he will be graciously pleased to adopt maxims of policy more suited to the circumstances of the times than those by which his ministers appear to have been governed, and to direct his servants to take measures which, by differing essentially, as well in their tendency as in the principle upon which they are founded, from those which have hitherto marked their conduct, may give this country some reasonable hope, at no very distant period, of the establishment of a peace suitable to the interests of Great Britain, and likely to preserve the tranquillity of Europe."

Mr. Pitt answered Mr. Fox at great length; after which the House divided:

*Tellers*

*Tellers*

YEAS { Mr. Whitbread } 42.—NOES { Mr. J. Smyth } 216.  
           { Gen. Tarleton }

So it passed in the negative.

## KING'S MESSAGE RESPECTING THE RUPTURE OF THE NEGOTIATION FOR PEACE WITH FRANCE

*December 30, 1796.*

ON the 26th of December Mr. Secretary Dundas presented a message from his majesty, acquainting the House with the rupture of the negotiation for peace with France. On the following day Mr. Pitt, after entering into an elaborate defence of the conduct of his majesty's ministers during the progress of the negotiation, moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message; and for having been pleased to lay before the House the papers which have been exchanged in the course of the late discussion, and the account transmitted to his majesty of its final result:—to assure his majesty that we cannot but deeply participate in the concern which his majesty (from his constant regard to the interests of his subjects) naturally feels in the disappointment of his earnest endeavours to effect the restoration of peace, and in the abrupt determination, on the part of the French government, of the negotiation in which his majesty was engaged: but that it affords us the greatest consolation, and the utmost incitement to our zeal and perseverance, to observe the abundant proofs that his majesty's conduct has been guided by a sincere desire to effect the restoration of general peace, and to provide for the permanent interests of his kingdoms, and for the general security of Europe; while his enemies have advanced pretensions at once inconsistent with those objects, unsupported even on the grounds on which they were professed to rest, and repugnant both to the system established by repeated treaties, and to the principles and practice which have hitherto regulated the intercourse of independent nations:—that, in this situation, persuaded that the present continuance of the calamities of war can be imputed only to the unjust and exorbitant views of his majesty's enemies, and looking forward, with anxiety, to the moment when they may be disposed to act on different principles, we feel it incumbent on us to afford his majesty the most firm and zealous support in such measures as may be most likely to bring this great contest to a safe and honourable issue; and we place the fullest reliance, under the protection of Providence, on his majesty's vigilant concern for the interests of his subjects, on the tried valour of his forces by sea and land, and on the zeal, public spirit, and resources of these kingdoms, which can never be called forth under circumstances more important to their permanent welfare, and to the general security and interests of Europe."—Mr. Erskine commenced a most eloquent reply to the



chancellor of the exchequer, but was suddenly obliged to sit down in consequence of indisposition. Upon this

Mr. Fox rose and said: Sorry, indeed, am I on account of my honourable and learned friend, whose indisposition has suddenly compelled him to sit down; sorry for the sake of the House, whose information, from the train of argument which he had adopted, has been thus unpleasantly interrupted; and sorry for the cause of peace and Great Britain, which ministers, by their imprudent counsels and infatuated policy, seem determined to push to the last verge of ruin, that I am thus unexpectedly called upon to address the House on the present occasion. I feel it, however, incumbent upon me to step forward, knowing that my opinion on the subject entirely coincides with that of my honourable and learned friend who has just sat down, but lamenting that, in consequence of his indisposition, the argument on this momentous question must considerably suffer from the want of that ability with which it would have been enforced by superior powers. I need not state that the business before us is of the utmost importance, that the occasion is such as, though we may not think it necessary to contemplate it with despair, we cannot survey but with the most serious considerations, and with feelings of the deepest regret. After a war of four years, which is stated to have been attended with many occurrences highly honourable and advantageous to the British arms, and to have been accompanied with no disgrace, after the immense expenditure incurred in the prosecution of hostilities, an expenditure which undoubtedly has been greatly aggravated by the extravagance of those concerned in superintending the plan of operations, after an addition of no less than two hundred millions to the national debt, and of nine millions to the permanent taxes of the country; after an enormous effusion of human blood; after an incalculable addition to the sum of human wretchedness, so far are we from having gained any point or any object for which we set out in the war, so far are we from having achieved any advantage, that the minister has this night come forward in a most elaborate speech, and has endeavoured to prove that the only effect has been that the enemy have become more unreasonable than ever in their pretensions, and that all hopes of peace are removed to a still greater distance. We are now not allowed to hope for the restoration of peace unless some change is wrought by the events of war. And at what period is this prospect brought forward? After a war of four years, which so far from

having produced any favourable change in the disposition of the enemy, if we may trust to the representations of the right honourable gentleman, has only served to increase the insolence of their style, and the exorbitance of their pretensions. The same necessity is still stated to exist for the continuance of the war.

It would, Sir, have been some consolation if after the right honourable gentleman had stated at such length, and with such an elaborate display of eloquence, the exorbitant pretensions of the enemy, he had suggested some means of reducing them. But, good God, how striking is the contrast! In this speech of three hours I find only one solitary sentence which is at all calculated to afford any hope of a satisfactory issue to the present unfortunate contest. And of what materials does the remainder of the speech consist? It is merely a revival of opinions by which we have been led on from year to year, and by which we have found ourselves constantly deluded. We are left in the same hopeless state with respect to the attainment of the object of the contest. The right honourable gentleman says that he formerly gave a representation of the deplorable state of the French finances from uncertain documents, but that he is now enabled to confirm the same representation from the most indubitable authority—the statement of the directory. I am apt to believe that the documents of the right honourable gentleman in both instances are equally authoritative. Formerly he proceeded on the speeches of leading members of the convention, and on official reports. He now grounded his statement on a publication of the directory. If his authority has failed him in former instances, what force can he now attach to conclusions drawn from similar premises? It has been found from experience that in proportion as the finances of the French have been acknowledged, even by themselves, to be reduced to the lowest ebb, in the same proportion have their exertions been wonderful and unparalleled. Now the right honourable gentleman builds his conclusion of the certain ruin of the French finances on an immediate statement from the directory. I wonder that he does not go farther, and quote the very ingenious letter of Lord Malmesbury, in which he reports the conversation that took place between him and M. Delacroix. In this conversation the French minister is represented as having paid the highest compliments to the extensive means possessed by this country, as having described it from its internal sources of wealth, and from its colonies in the Indies,

to be mistress of almost boundless resources. Thus, while the directory admit that Great Britain is distinguished by her wealth, and full of resources, they have no hesitation to acknowledge their own poverty and embarrassments. They acknowledge to all Europe that from the want of money the army is considerably in arrears, and every branch of the internal administration under circumstances of the greatest embarrassment and distress. They at the same time allow to this country all the advantages of an augmented commerce, and of increasing opulence and prosperity. In this House we have heard France represented as sometimes in the gulf, and sometimes on the verge of bankruptcy; and it is rather curious that at different periods we should have heard it alternately described at one time as in the very gulf, and at another as on the verge of bankruptcy. But, while they admit the ruined state of their own finances, what a striking contrast do their exertions in their present contest, and the success which has followed from their operations, afford to the conduct and fate of those who have been entrusted with the management of the war on the part of this country! Whilst we, in every quarter which it was deemed most important to defend, have been losing city after city; whilst we have been equally driven from the possessions which we conceived to be necessary to the security of our commerce, or to the balance of power, France, resourceless and dispirited, all the while avowing her own distressed situation with respect to finance, and talking in the most respectful terms of our wealth and resources, has been constantly adding to her acquisitions and aggrandising her empire. France appears, in the present moment, as the conqueror of most extensive and important territories. Belgium is annexed to her empire, great part of Italy has yielded to the force of her arms, and Holland is now united to the fate of the republic by ties of the strictest alliance. If, indeed, these acquisitions could be regained to the cause of Great Britain and her allies by a lofty tone of argument, if the tide of victory could be turned by the dexterity of debate, and the efficacy of our exertions bore any proportion to the insolence of our boasting, we need not yet be afraid to claim a decided superiority. We are not at all deficient on the score of confident assertion or presumptuous menace.

But, Sir, it is by other means and by another criterion that this question is to be decided. Weak and inconsiderable as I am in this House, I did my utmost previous to the commence-

ment of this unfortunate contest to persuade the government to send an ambassador to Paris, when undoubtedly he would have met with the treatment which an ambassador of Great Britain is now alleged to have experienced. But when ministers tell us that this ambassador was dismissed in a way unexampled in the history of civilised nations, they surely must have forgot the manner in which M. Chauvelin was sent from this country. At a subsequent period, when the whole of Belgium was regained, when the French were not possessed of one foot of ground in that territory, did I then neglect my duty to the country? No! I then renewed my motion for peace. This was at the period before the powers combined against France had gained the fortress of Valenciennes; but when it was certain that it must fall, I contended that then was the period to make peace. And I now ask, if an attempt had been then made to negotiate, whether we might not have expected to have obtained peace on terms as honourable and as advantageous as any which we can now possibly lay claim to? Again and again have I pressed upon the House the necessity and policy of adopting measures for the restoration of peace, and again and again have my motions for that purpose been rejected. In order to show how greatly ministers miscalculated the nature of the contest at that former period when I argued for peace, it was said, "What, make peace before you have achieved a single contest, and when you are just beginning to make advances in the country of the enemy!" Such, at that time, was the style of reasoning brought forward in opposition to the arguments which I urged in favour of peace. So widely were ministers then deceived with respect to the nature of the contest, so falsely did they calculate as to the turn of subsequent events! Unhappy calculation! Unhappy mistake! The object did not respect a particular branch of trade or a limited extent of territory: the most important interests of the country were at stake. The ministers, by their calculations, were not pledging Jamaica, or any island of the West Indies; they were pledging Great Britain herself, the fate of which may in some degree be considered as depending on the issue of this night's debate. The right honourable gentleman, formerly, in talking of the nature of the contest, made use of a memorable expression, which cannot easily be forgotten. He intimated that the nature of the contest was such that our exertions ought to be bounded only by our resources, and that our efforts must be extended to the utmost pitch before we could hope for an honourable

termination of the struggle. He expressly declared that we ought not to cease from the contest till we should be able to say:

Potuit quæ plurima virtus  
Esse, fuit. Toto certatum est corpore regni.

The right honourable gentleman has stated the difficulties attendant upon the negotiation as arising from two circumstances; first, the difficulty in all cases of proposing overtures, without being able to ascertain what reception they are likely to experience; secondly, the particular obstacles from the relative situation of the two countries. The right honourable gentleman has, however, omitted to state a difficulty more weighty and insuperable than either of those I have now mentioned. In every negotiation the difficulty of coming to any definitive arrangement must be infinitely increased in proportion to the degree of distrust entertained by the parties with respect to their mutual intentions. If the right honourable gentleman had some reason to suspect the sincerity of the French directory, had not they at least equal ground to entertain the same doubts with respect to his views in the negotiation? After every epithet of reproach had been exhausted by ministers to vilify their characters, was it to be expected that they would readily listen to terms of peace dictated by those ministers, except they were brought into that state of necessity and submission which precluded them from any alternative, and compelled them to an unconditional compliance with any pacific proposition that might be presented to their acceptance? When Lord Malmesbury, in addressing the French minister, so often brings forward his profession of high consideration, I cannot but smile when I recollect that Lord Auckland was made a peer (for I know of no other reason for his advancement to that dignity) merely because he declared that the men who are now addressed in such respectful terms "ought to be put under the sword of the law," and because he denounced them as miscreants and traitors to all Europe. His lordship, by this declaration brought forward in a public capacity, showed that he, acting on the part of Great Britain, was not slow to be their executioner and their judge.

Sir, there is one part of the address which the right honourable gentleman has entirely omitted to notice, and to which I can by no means subscribe—that his majesty has neglected no proper opportunity to conclude this war. A few years ago, when I earnestly pressed the propriety of negotiation, the

right honourable gentleman contended that the French were not capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity. He neither, however, at that time, nor at any subsequent period, showed any reason why they were not capable of maintaining those relations. I ask in what respect they are now become more capable of maintaining those relations than when I formerly proposed to treat? Will the right honourable gentleman say that then there was only a provisional government and that there now exists a permanent constitution? I am sure that he will not venture to press that argument, as he must be aware of the extent to which it will lead him. And if such be the case, I have no hesitation to state that the assertion in the address, that no proper opportunity has been omitted to conclude peace, is entirely false, and as such, must meet my decided negative. At last, however, the right honourable gentleman declares that he felt it his duty to attempt negotiation. I did not think it my duty to come forward to animadvert either on the motives of his conduct, or on the probable result of the measure, till the event had spoken for itself. The result has proved to be such as, however anxiously we may be disposed to deprecate it, it was not difficult to foresee from the mode in which it has been conducted. If the country, indeed, consider the administration of the right honourable gentleman to be a blessing, they must take their choice between the continuance of that blessing and the restoration of peace. It is evident that those individuals who have conducted the war with such notorious incapacity, and entailed so many mischiefs on the country, must of all others be the most unfit to repair the errors of their own policy and secure to Great Britain the enjoyment of permanent tranquillity. But not only have they evinced this glaring incapacity in the management of the present war, their conduct in former negotiations with respect to Spain and Russia has been such as on the one hand to excite considerable distrust and on the other to inspire a well-grounded hope of bringing them down from the loftiest pretensions to the most humiliating concessions. But what can be thought of their sincerity in the present instance when they have repeatedly declared that any peace, under the particular circumstances, could only afford a breathing space from hostility, and ultimately must tend to redouble all the mischiefs to be dreaded from a continuance of the war? But even if ministers had conducted the war with ability as distinguished as their incapacity has been notorious, if they

had displayed in debate as much temper and prudence as they have discovered impolitic and indecent violence, if they had shown themselves as much friends to the French as on every occasion they have endeavoured to prove themselves the reverse, still I should have no hopes of peace on any permanent basis, except the present system of policy was entirely changed, and the principles upon which the war was undertaken totally disavowed. If the administration were to be transferred into the hands of persons whose abilities I admire, and whose integrity I respect as much as I condemn and reprobate the talents and character of those who are now placed at the helm of affairs, still I should consider this change of system, and disavowal of principles, to be a necessary preliminary of peace. It is necessary, Sir, for the solidity of any peace that may be concluded, that maxims of sound sense and of impartial equity be recognised in the outset of the negotiation. The present has been a war of passion and of prejudice, and not of policy and self-defence. The right honourable gentleman, whatever may have been his sincerity in the transaction, is no stranger to the advantages that may be derived from the idea of a pending negotiation. That he now feels those advantages nobody will dispute. I know that some weeks ago a very confident report was circulated with respect to the probability of peace. It would be curious to know how far Lord Malmesbury at that period was influenced by any such belief. It does not appear from the papers on the table that at the moment he could reasonably hope for a successful issue to his negotiation. It seems doubtful, indeed, from the inspection of those papers whether Lord Malmesbury was not sent over merely to show his diplomatic dexterity; to fence and parry with M. Delacroix, in order to evince his superior skill and adroitness in the management of argument and the arts of political finesse; to confound the shallow capacity and superficial reasoning of the French minister, and to make the cause of this country appear to be the better cause. While Lord Malmesbury was employed thus honourably in the display of his talents at Paris, the minister had an object of policy to answer at home. It was found convenient for the purpose of financial arrangements to hold out the hopes of peace till such time as it was found that the appearance of negotiation might be renounced without any unfavourable effect as to the supplies of the year.

But, in order more completely to ascertain the sincerity which has been shown by ministers in the desire which they

have expressed for peace, and the fairness of the means which they have employed for the attainment of that object, it may be necessary to enter a little more minutely into the history of the negotiation, and to follow the right honourable gentleman through the long detail which he has brought forward on the subject, and which was sufficiently laboured to prove that he was aware of all the difficulties with which he had to contend in vindicating the character of the British government and of the necessity of putting the most favourable gloss upon their conduct. The first step taken for the purpose of negotiation was the communication at Basle, in which Mr. Wickham had been engaged as the agent of the British government. As he was not authorised to take any definitive step, or to make any declaration binding on the government, but little stress could be laid on that circumstance. Those, however, who attended to the details of that transaction would not be disposed, even in that early stage of the business, to draw any inference very favourable to the sincerity of ministers. The mission of Lord Malmesbury is unquestionably what ministers wish to be considered as the grand effort for peace, and as affording an unequivocal proof of the sincerity of their wishes for its attainment. Of the details of that negotiation we are enabled to judge from the papers which have been laid upon the table of this House. Until the publication of his majesty's manifesto on the subject, I was only acquainted with the circumstances of that transaction from the statement of the public prints. I was not a little surprised when the manifesto reached me in the country, and from the perusal of its contents was induced to suspect that I must have been completely misled in my previous information. On the inspection, however, of the papers laid on your table, I was still more surprised when I found that the public prints were much more accurate in their representation of facts than his majesty's declaration. Never, indeed, was there any paper brought forward with the stamp of official authority so little connected with the documents upon which it is professed to be founded; so little warranted in the conclusions drawn from its premises. It entirely conceals the most important facts of the negotiation, and states the others so loosely as not to exhibit them in any precise and distinct shape. The right honourable gentleman has stated that a degree of disrespect was in the first instance shown to a foreign court by the French directory, in their refusal to grant a passport for a British ambassador upon the



application of the minister from the court of Denmark. But how does this fact stand? The court of Denmark did not at all interfere in the business. The Danish minister, in the letter in which he applied for a passport, expressly stated that he acted merely in a private capacity, and not in consequence of any instruction which he had received from his court. So much, then, for the alleged disrespect shown by the French to a foreign court, and the inference which is thence drawn of a disposition thus manifested to throw contempt on all established usages, and to dispense with the ordinary forms of accommodation and the understood civilities of political intercourse.

I understand that as an apology for bringing forward the manifesto previous to the publication of the papers much has been said of the mechanical labour of preparing those papers for the inspection of the House. I have formerly been in office, and I believe that those who are now engaged in the service of the department are fully as capable and diligent as the persons by whom I was then assisted. And I confidently declare that I see nothing in the mechanical labour of those papers that, if they had arrived on Saturday morning, ought to have prevented them from being in a state of readiness to be produced on Saturday evening. But I rather suspect that with regard to the publication of the manifesto, it was thought expedient to attempt to give a bias to the sentiments of the House before it was deemed advisable to submit the facts contained in the papers to their cool and sober investigation. As to the delay which has been imputed on the score of mechanical labour, I am rather disposed to believe that it was purposely interposed in order to afford to ministers an opportunity of revising the papers and of deciding what part of their contents it might be prudent to suppress and what might be safely submitted to the public eye. It is curious to attend to the nature of the powers with which Lord Malmesbury was furnished, and to their connection with the object of his mission. He was sent in order to negotiate for peace, and furnished with full powers to conclude; but though he was thus authorised to conclude, he was allowed no latitude to treat. He had no instructions with respect to the terms he should propose, and no discretion upon which to act with respect to the propositions he might receive. When he was asked if he came to treat for the King of Great Britain separately, he said, No: but that he came jointly to treat for the King of Great Britain and his allies. When he was asked if he was furnished with any powers from those allies,

he again replied, No. When he was asked what terms he had to propose, he said he would send for instructions. Thus it appeared that he was empowered to conclude for the King of Great Britain, but not qualified to treat; and that for the allies for whom he came to treat, he had no power to conclude. Could there possibly be a more ridiculous farce—a more palpable mockery of the forms of negotiation?

We next come to the basis; and this, indeed, carries us but a little way in the progress of negotiation. In this instance the basis was laid so wide as to comprehend no distinct object, and to be reducible to no precise meaning. It was that sort of general principle which no one could possibly dispute, but which could at the same time be attended with no practical benefit. The French accordingly stated that they had agreed to your principle, and that they only disputed its application. The right honourable gentleman has asserted that a basis is always desirable; but then it ought to be a basis which meant something, and not, as in the present instance, which meant nothing. The principle of mutual compensations is substantially recognised in every negotiation, and did not require to be specified. The general objects of dispute in fixing a basis of negotiation have been whether it should be regulated by the *status quo ante bellum* or the *uti possidetis*. The right honourable gentleman stated, as a proof of reluctance to negotiate on the part of the French, that they for some time hesitated to admit our proposed basis; but, in fact, they virtually recognised the principle when they entered into the discussion of terms. He who asks what you will give, or states what he is willing to receive, at once admits the basis of mutual compensation. But as a proof of the consistency of ministers, a fortnight afterwards, when the French formally recognised the principle and asked Lord Malmesbury what terms he was prepared to propose, he was unprovided with any answer and obliged to send to this country for instructions. What inference is to be drawn from this conduct on the part of ministers? Is it not most probable that by thus bringing forward a futile, illusory, and unmeaning basis they expected to disgust the French in the first instance, and at once to get rid of the negotiation? And if the French, who must have felt themselves mocked by this treatment, and who must have been more and more assured of the insincerity of our ministers, had thought proper to stop all further proceedings, would they not have been fully justified? On what principle were they bound to

countenance a transaction which was conducted with no good faith, and could promise no satisfactory issue? Undoubtedly ministers expected that the French would resent the insult and break off the negotiation in its outset. They thus hoped to obtain an easy credit for their pacific intentions, and to throw upon the enemy the odium of determined hostility and an unreasonable rejection of the preliminary basis of negotiation. Unfortunately, however, for this project, the basis was recognised. The disappointment of ministers was evident. Lord Malmesbury was unprepared how to act, and obliged to send home for further instructions. The questions with ministers then became, "Since the French have so ungraciously and unexpectedly accepted the basis which we intended to be rejected, what can we find that they must be indispensably called upon to refuse? What terms of insult and humiliation can we find that may rouse their pride, and inevitably provoke rejection?" Lord Malmesbury, who before had no terms to propose, was now instructed to bring forward terms for the purpose of being rejected; and care was taken that they should be of such a nature as could not undergo much discussion or readily to fail of their purpose.

I come now, Sir, to consider what was said by the right honourable gentleman with respect to the particular terms. In commencing this part of his speech, he thought some apology necessary for the sort of terms which had been proposed by Lord Malmesbury on the part of this country. He stated that it was always usual to be somewhat high in our demands in the first instance; that propositions at the commencement of a negotiation were never considered as decisive, and that, in the progress of treating, we might relax from our original demands as circumstances should render expedient. But, was the right honourable gentleman so unfit for the situation which he held, so ill qualified to judge of the conduct which was proper for those times, as seriously to maintain this argument? Did he not recollect that, from what he had himself stated, negotiation itself might be considered as made upon a hostile principle? He had described it as a negotiation, the unsuccessful result of which must tend to divide France and to unite Great Britain, which must give indubitable confirmation to the justice of our cause and add double energy to our future efforts. In this situation, and with this particular view, what wise man would have looked to the last precedent of negotiation in order to regulate his conduct, and have conceived it necessary to proceed

with all the tediousness of forms and dexterity of diplomatic artifice which might have been employed in any former instance? Instead of carrying your pretensions higher than you might be disposed to accept, you should have gone to the other extreme; you should have stated them at the lowest point of what you deemed to be fair and equitable, and, if anything, have been rather below the mark of what you might fairly claim than exorbitant and unreasonable in your demands. You would thus have secured the end which the minister professed to have in view—to render apparent to all Europe the equity and moderation of your own sentiments and the injustice and ambition of the enemy. Had the French, from a suspicion of your sincerity, been inclined to break off the negotiation in the first stage, they might have said, “As no basis has been agreed upon, we see that the negotiation can come to no good, and therefore we will stop all further proceedings.” But when they acceded to your basis, and invited you to propose particular terms, it became you to be doubly careful, by the fairness and moderation with which you acted, to demonstrate the equity of your character and vindicate your sincerity in the eyes of Europe.

I shall now advert, Sir, to the two confidential memorials. I confess that I never was more struck with the impossibility, even for talents the most splendid and eloquence the most powerful, to cover the weakness of a cause, and supply the deficiency of real argument, than in the instance of what the right honourable gentleman said with respect to Holland. Even if Holland should be restored to its former situation, if the stadtholder should be reinstated in the government, and the alliance renewed with this country, the right honourable gentleman does not go the length of saying that even then he would restore to Holland all her former possessions. No: he might then, perhaps, only be disposed to relax in their favour a considerable part of the conditions on which the present state of things obliges him to insist. A right honourable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) some time since made a very imprudent declaration in this House—that as we had taken the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon, we meant to keep them for ever. We feel ourselves, it seems, too nearly interested in those acquisitions to be disposed to relinquish them. This is reasoning very much *à la Française*. We say that it is better even for the Dutch themselves that Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope should be in our hands than in theirs. The French may, with equal

justice, allege the same pretence for their refusal to part with Belgium. They may say that it is more for the interest of Belgium that it should remain in their hands than that it should be restored to Austria. But if Holland be not, in every respect, reinstated in her former situation, then, says the right honourable gentleman, we have nothing to propose. It is curious to remark, in the very moment that he is at such pains to represent the demands of the French as in the highest degree exorbitant and unjust, how much he countenances those demands by the style of his own pretensions. He says, "We have taken a great deal from Holland, they have taken nothing from us, therefore we are not bound in justice and equity to make them any restitution; but if Maestricht, or some place, be ceded to the emperor for the security of the Austrian Netherlands, we may perhaps be induced to make them some restitution, but on no account can we consent that Ceylon or the Cape of Good Hope shall be restored." On the same grounds might the French say, "We have taken a great deal from the emperor, he has taken nothing from us, we therefore are not bound in justice and equity to make him any restitution: we demand that the *uti possidetis* shall be the basis of the negotiation." What are the specific proposals which you make to the French? You propose to them to give up all their conquests to the emperor and to evacuate Italy. The right honourable gentleman has said that it is a strained geographical supposition that by this demand with respect to Italy it should be understood that they are also required to evacuate Savoy and Nice. I know not upon what geographical authority he proceeds when he affirms that this would be a strained supposition. I always thought that these places had been in no other country but Italy; perhaps I may have been mistaken. You propose to the French to evacuate Italy, to give up the Milanese, Belgium and Luxemburg; you demand of them to negotiate the arrangement of peace with Germany, with his imperial majesty as constitutional head of the empire. And though the French are already at peace with the most considerable Germanic powers, with the King of Prussia, with the Electors of Saxony, Hanover, etc., you thus would place them in a situation in which they would have to begin all these treaties anew. You hint, indeed, that in consequence of this arrangement, which supposes on their part so great a sacrifice, it is not impossible that some cession may be made to them on the Germanic side of their frontiers. And in return for all the sacrifices you require from the French,

you offer to restore to them Martinique, St. Lucia, Tobago; reserving, however, one of them as an equivalent if they are to retain St. Domingo.

The restoration of Belgium is stated as a *sine quâ non*; it has been represented to be of the utmost importance that it should not be suffered to remain in the hands of the French. I should, indeed, regret to see Belgium attached to the territories of the republic; but if you are really sincere in your wishes for peace, if you consider Belgium as an object of so much value, do not offer brass for gold. Let us put the case that Belgium was still in the hands of the emperor, how would you treat the offer of two or three West India islands, on the part of the French, in order that it might be given up to them? If you really wished France to give up Belgium, you should have offered to give up the Cape of Good Hope, which a determination has been so indiscreetly expressed to retain. I have no hesitation in saying that it ought only to be considered as an instrument to procure the restoration of peace on favourable terms, and that if you could get a proper equivalent, you ought not to keep it. What you now offer is trifling indeed, and if France should comply with your demands, what would be her relative situation with respect to the other powers of Europe? She would, in that case, have given up Belgium, Luxemburg and Italy, and further it is required that something should be ceded to the emperor, in order, as is stated, to render him secure on the side of the Austrian Netherlands. The three great powers of Europe will all of them be left with considerable acquisitions. The King of Prussia has gained a third part of Poland. Russia has obtained a considerable extent of territory from that unfortunate country; and, in addition to his share in the division, it is also proposed that the Emperor of Germany shall be put in possession of Maestricht, or of some other place. France is only to be left with Savoy, Nice and Avignon. Is the state of the war such as to justify this proposition? Is it fair and equitable that all the other powers should gain more than France? When Great Britain made a proposition so unreasonable, France naturally took a step calculated to give confidence to the people in those countries she had annexed to the republic, by declaring that on no account could she consent to give them up. In the ingenious conference which took place between the British ambassador and the French minister, Lord Malmesbury declared that the King of Great Britain would not recede from his demand with respect to the

Netherlands. Must not the French, in consequence of this declaration, have been induced to assume an equally resolute tone with respect to their intention of keeping that territory, when, from the nature of the terms proposed, they perceived no likelihood that peace could be had? As to the French minister having asked Lord Malmesbury to give in his ultimatum, it evidently meant no more than that he should make a formal declaration of what he had said with respect to Belgium; a demand which surely cannot be considered as unreasonable. After having heard this day so much stated of the value of Belgium, and such importance attached to the demand that it should be restored to the emperor, I cannot but recollect that it is not very long since the people of that country were in a state of rebellion, and that it was surmised at the time that we were by no means averse to support them in their endeavours to shake off the Austrian yoke. But however great the value of Belgium may be, is it an object of such immense consequence as to justify the continuance of a long, a hazardous and destructive war? Is it worth being contended for at the expense of such blood and treasure? And even if the objects be deemed so valuable as to justify all these sacrifices, there is another question to be considered. If, in addition to that expense and carnage with which the war has already been attended, it be proper to sacrifice a hundred millions more and a hundred thousand men for its attainment, it ought also to be shown that it is attainable by those means. From the experience of the past, who will pretend to say that a continuance of war and all its calamities will tend ultimately to bring you nearer to your object? It ought, beside, to be recollected that the emperor, who is your friend to-day, may be your enemy to-morrow. I remember that it is not eight months since the emperor was not so much a favourite with ministers; perhaps, indeed, they were cautious in expressing their partiality, lest it should be suspected that money was then going to the court of Vienna. At that time the King of Sardinia was extolled as a pattern of fidelity to all princes: the emperor seemed to make no figure in the comparison. I do not mean to impute to the Sardinian monarch any breach of faith; circumstances of necessity compelled him to conclude a treaty with the French republic, and we have not heard in what situation he is now to be considered with respect to this country. Ministers have already sent large sums to his imperial majesty: we are about to make still further advances, and it cannot be calcu-

lated that the alliance can be maintained at an expense to the country of less than two millions annually. I mean no reflection on the character of the emperor; but if we should not be able to grant him the same assistance, he may be reduced to the same necessity as the King of Sardinia, and compelled to conclude a peace. When all these circumstances are considered, together with the sacrifices which must necessarily be incurred in the attempt to wrest Belgium from the French, and the uncertainty of obtaining the object, the minister who on that ground only shall refuse to make peace has undoubtedly much to answer for on the score both of policy and humanity.

And here, Sir, comes the question of the treaty concluded with the emperor in 1793, by which we engaged not to lay down our arms without his consent. I greatly lamented the conclusion of any such treaty at the time, and then brought forward a motion that it was the duty of the House not to approve of any engagements that might tend to create obstacles in the way of peace. If we urge the stipulations of a treaty as a reason why we cannot conclude peace but on certain terms, we directly sanction the sort of argument which is represented as so unjustifiable on the part of the French. I certainly am no friend to setting up the constitution of France against the *droit publique* of Europe. But are the French in their arrangements to consider the engagements of our treaties as of greater weight and consequence than we affect to consider theirs? The right honourable gentleman has put the case, that supposing the French constitution decreed that the city of Westminster formed an integral part of the republic, were we bound to respect such a determination? The case may be retorted that if we by our treaty with the emperor had stipulated to put him in possession of Paris, with what colour could so ridiculous a stipulation be urged as an obstacle to peace? We had no more right to talk of our treaties than they of the regulations laid down with respect to their boundaries. If an absurd or impracticable condition is introduced into a treaty, is there not reason to suspect that it has been foisted in merely for the purpose of throwing difficulties in the way of peace?

The right honourable gentleman has imputed to the French all the odium and blame of breaking off the negotiation. He says that we are not bound by anything as a *sine quâ non*, for that, in the nature of a negotiation, is impossible until it is concluded. That, Sir, is easily stated in the course of a debate. But whatever the right honourable gentleman may say upon



the subject, the world at large, in judging dispassionately upon it, will regard the memorial of Lord Malmesbury as the *sine quâ non* of the court of Great Britain respecting Belgium. You say it may be recovered by force of arms. Good God! what is the probability of that event? What are we to do? What can we do? What security have we that we shall not sink in our prospects upon that event, and that they will not rise in proportion as we sink? Remember the time when Belgium was in possession of the allies, and it was proposed that we should enter upon a negotiation for peace then, and at which time the French would have gladly attended to terms of peace of which they will not now hear. What, in the prosecution of this unhappy contest, are you to look for the farther you proceed but terms still worse than those which might obtain even now, if you gave proof of sincerity in the negotiation? Consider what your disgrace will be if you fail to recover Belgium, which you have told the world is a *sine quâ non*. Are you prepared for all the hazards that may attend it? If you are, say so at once boldly, and act like men; but do not amuse the people of this country by a delusive pretence, as you did by an amendment which you adopted to get rid of the motion of an honourable friend of mine, and in which you stated to Europe that you would negotiate with France when her government was capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with other powers.<sup>1</sup> I know that these little tricks and artifices have had their ends. They have often, much too often, been employed to cover the dexterity of a debate; and in some situations they may almost appear harmless; but these little quibbling distinctions are not adapted to the important affairs of which we are now to consider. The minister, in ordinary cases, shall be welcome on my part to his little triumph in such little artifices: but these are not times to indulge him in them. He is not made for these times of great difficulty. When the fate of a question, comparatively indifferent, is before us, his talents are well adapted to obtain success, which, for my own part, I do not envy him; but when the fate of empires depends upon our proceedings, we should not give way to his vanity. These are times that require openness and candour, and a determination to look at the posture of our affairs in a bold and undaunted manner. Prevarication, subterfuge, and evasion will not now do. The plain question now is, peace or war? However the right honourable gentleman may contrive to persuade

<sup>1</sup> See p. 233.

the majority of this House that his inclinations bend towards peace, I have no doubt but the papers in the interest of ministers will hold forth to the public that the vigorous prosecution of the war is the only measure which the country has left for its security. Members of this House, when they go into the country, will perhaps hold a different language, and tell their constituents that they do not hold themselves pledged to a continuance of the war. But it will not be believed. The *sine quâ non* with regard to Belgium will overbalance the assertions of members of parliament. Parliament has not that credit which it once had—parliament does not deserve to have that credit.

There is, Sir, a generally prevailing idea that the House cannot get rid of the decision of this day. The question is plainly, peace or war? The proposition of a negotiation was said to be for peace: the present address is evidently for war. It will not be got rid of by any ambiguous shuffling, by way of amendment, as former motions in this House have been. An honourable friend of mine near me (Mr. Grey) some time ago moved a fact. The minister thought proper to decline it, but he did not dare to do it by a direct negative; he therefore got rid of it by a shuffling amendment. In consequence of the cavils of that day, one hundred millions sterling have been added to the national debt, and half a million of souls have been swept from the face of the earth. If the House shall be of opinion that Belgium is really entitled to be regarded as a *sine quâ non*, that it is an object for which this country ought to continue at war till it has expended another hundred millions and shed the blood of half a million more of our fellow-creatures; if the House is of this opinion, it ought openly to declare it. If, on the contrary, the House should think with me that this country ought not to expend such immense treasures of money and blood to obtain Belgium in order to restore it to the emperor, who may, perhaps, in a short time be no longer our ally—then let them act like men, and by some fair and unequivocal amendment convince the country that they will no longer be parties to such a dreadful waste of blood and treasure.

I now come, Sir, to what is said with regard to the breaking off the negotiation by making Belgium a *sine quâ non*. If it be true that Lord Malmesbury did this, I ask upon what ground it was done. Was the emperor a party to the negotiation? Here, then, is a *sine quâ non* made in a matter intended solely for the benefit of the emperor, to which, nevertheless, he is not

a party, and which we do not know whether he himself would absolutely insist on or not. Surely this might have been known before the negotiation was entered upon. When we were so often sending such immense sums to the emperor, millions after millions, surely some person or other employed in those offices might have asked the question. Has anyone done so? No. I ask any impartial man, then, if this is not a mere mockery? But, says the right honourable gentleman with great emphasis, why did not the directory present a *contre projet*? To whom should they present it? Was the emperor a party? No. They had, then, no one to present it to, for everything contained in our *projet* was for the emperor's benefit alone. I agree with the right honourable gentleman as to the principle that a people who come into the power of another people by the chance of war cannot, by the law of nations, be disposed of lawfully till the definitive treaty of peace is concluded; but this is very different from a people who are left at liberty to choose a government for themselves, and who, after such liberty, voluntarily adopt the step of uniting themselves with their neighbours, and those who, perhaps, at one time might have claimed over them the right of conquest.

Sir, there is one thing very remarkable: that in all this negotiation, where almost every possession of all the parties is taken notice of, one place should never once have been mentioned. The name of the valuable and important island of Corsica never appears in a single instance. Did ministers say when they took Corsica, You may form a government of your own, and be a free people? Did they offer to leave them to themselves? No; they sent a viceroy. Sir Gilbert Elliot went as a representative of his majesty, cooked them up a constitution, half French, half English, and endeavoured to detach them entirely from any predilections they might be impressed with in favour of French principles. The French were, and always had been, represented by ministers, and those they employed, as a horde of assassins. Suppose the Corsicans had said they chose the King of Great Britain as their king, and had desired, in the strongest terms, to be attached to the British empire as a part of it, and entreated that they might not be given up to this horde of assassins; would you have said in a negotiation for peace that Corsica was an object of restoration? I fancy not. May not the French, then, use the same argument with respect to Belgium? On former occasions, when I said that the conquests in the West

Indies would be a means of negotiation, the right honourable gentleman started at the idea. He then ridiculed the notion of a *status quo ante bellum*; he particularly alluded to Martinique, which he said was not to be considered like a conquest in former wars; that this island was taken at the particular request of the inhabitants of it, who all desired to be taken into the protection and allegiance and to become subjects of his Britannic majesty. Martinique was, however, mentioned in this negotiation, and the right honourable gentleman had gone off from his high language.

The right honourable gentleman has mentioned the breaking off the negotiation as "a matter of disappointment, but not of despondency or despair." I certainly am not one of those who despair of the country. I very well know that we are not yet at the end of our resources; but I am certain that we are every day approaching nearer to it. If we had peace at this moment, I have very little doubt but, with economy in every department, a due regard to the finances, and to the encouragement of the commerce and manufactures of the country, we might still retrieve ourselves from our present difficulties: but if the war is to continue any length of time, God only knows what may be the dreadful consequences! Certain, however, it is that peace cannot be obtained by a perseverance in the present system. It must be changed. I am not one of those who wish to alter the constitution: I wish only to reform it; to restore the voice of the people to that rank in it which it is entitled to hold; to make the opinion of the minister nothing; to see that of the people everything. I am told, You wish for a removal of the present ministers. I for one certainly do. The country, in my opinion, cannot be saved without it. The people must choose. If there are those who love the constitution under which they were born, and not the defacings of it by ministers, it is time for them to stand forward, to show themselves, and by constitutional means renovate that constitution which alone can save them and their posterity from inevitable ruin.

Mr. Fox then moved an amendment, by leaving out from the word "result" at the end of the first paragraph to the end of the question, in order to insert these words:

"Your majesty's faithful Commons have learnt with inexpressible concern that the negotiation lately commenced for the restoration of peace has been unhappily frustrated:

"In so awful and momentous a crisis, we feel it our duty to

speak to your majesty with that freedom and earnestness which becomes men anxious to preserve the honour of your majesty's crown, and to secure the interests of your people: in doing this we sincerely deplore the necessity we feel of declaring that, as well from the manner in which the late negotiation has been conducted, as from the substance of the memorial which appears to have produced the abrupt termination of it, we have reason to think your majesty's ministers were not sincere in their endeavours to procure the blessings of peace, so necessary for this distressed country:

"The prospect of national tranquillity, so anxiously looked for by all descriptions of your majesty's subjects, is at once removed from our view; on the one hand, your majesty's ministers insist upon the restoration of the Netherlands to the emperor as a *sine quâ non* from which they have pledged your majesty not to recede; while on the other, the executive directory of the French republic, with equal pertinacity, claim the preservation of that part of their conquest as a condition from which they cannot depart:

"Under these circumstances, we cannot help lamenting to your majesty the rashness and injustice of your majesty's ministers, whose long-continued misconduct has produced this embarrassing situation, by advising your majesty, before the blessings of peace had been unfortunately interrupted, to refuse all negotiation for the adjustment of the then subsisting differences, although the Netherlands, now the main obstacle to the return of tranquillity, were not then considered by the French republic as a part of their territory, but the annexation of them solemnly renounced, and the peace of Europe offered into your majesty's hands, upon the basis of that renunciation, and upon the security and independence of Holland, whilst she preserved her neutrality towards France:

"Your majesty's faithful Commons have further deeply to lament that soon after the commencement of the war, when the republic of Holland had been rescued from invasion, and the Netherlands had been recovered by the emperor, at a time too when most of the princes of Europe, with resources yet unexhausted, continued firm in their alliance with Great Britain, your majesty's ministers did not avail themselves of this high and commanding position for the negotiation of an honourable peace and the establishment of the political balance of Europe, but on the contrary, without any example in the principles and practice of this or other nations, refused to set on foot any negotiation whatsoever with the French republic; not upon a real or even alleged refusal on her part to listen to the propositions now rejected by her, nor to any specific proposal of indemnity or political security, but upon the arrogant and insulting pretence that her government was incapable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity amongst nations; and upon that unfounded and merely speculative assumption, advised your majesty to continue the war to a period when the difficulties in the way of peace have been so much increased by the defection of most of the powers engaged in the confederacy, and by the conquests and consequent pretensions of the French republic:

"Your majesty's faithful Commons having thus humbly submitted to your majesty the reflections which your majesty's gracious communication immediately suggest, will proceed with unremitting diligence to investigate the causes which have produced our present calamities, and to offer such advice as the critical and alarming circumstances of the nation may require."

Mr. Secretary Dundas answered Mr. Fox, and was replied to by Mr. Grey; after which the House divided on the motion, "That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question."

*Tellers.*

*Tellers.*

YEAS { Lord Hawkesbury } { Mr. Canning         }	212.—	NOES { Gen. Tarleton } { Mr. Jekyll     }
		37.

## KING'S MESSAGE RESPECTING OVERTURES OF PEACE FROM THE CONSULAR GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE

*February 3, 1800.*

On the 25th of December, 1799, Bonaparte addressed the following letter "To the King of Great Britain and Ireland":

"Called by the wishes of the French nation to occupy the first magistracy of the republic, I think it proper, on entering into office, to make a direct communication of it to your majesty.

"The war, which for eight years has ravaged the four quarters of the world, must it be eternal? Are there no means of coming to an understanding?

"How can the two most enlightened nations of Europe, powerful and strong beyond what their safety and independence require, sacrifice to ideas of vain greatness the benefits of commerce, internal prosperity, and the happiness of families? How is it that they do not feel that peace is of the first necessity, as well as of the first glory?

"These sentiments cannot be foreign to the heart of your majesty, who reigns over a free nation, and with the sole view of making it happy.

"Your majesty will only see in this overture my sincere desire to contribute efficaciously, for the second time, to a general pacification, by a step, speedy, entirely of confidence, and disengaged from those forms which, necessary perhaps to disguise the dependence of weak states, prove only in those which are strong the mutual desire of deceiving one another.

"France and England, by the abuse of their strength, may still, for a long time, for the misfortune of all nations, retard the period of their being exhausted. But I will venture to say it, the fate of all civilised nations is attached to the termination of a war which involves the whole world."

On the 22nd of January, 1800, the overtures received from France, together with the answers of the British government rejecting the said overtures, were laid, by his majesty's command, before both Houses; and on the 3rd of February Mr. Secretary Dundas moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message, and for having been graciously pleased to direct that there should be laid before this House copies of the communications recently received from the enemy and of the answers which have been returned thereto by his majesty's command: To assure his majesty that we consider the conduct which his majesty has held on this occasion to be such as was dictated by his regard to the most important interests of his dominions, and that, while we

join with his majesty in looking eagerly to the period when it may become practicable to re-establish the general tranquillity of Europe on a sure and solid foundation, and at the same time provide effectually for the security and permanent prosperity of his people, we shall feel it in the interval our indispensable duty to continue to his majesty, on behalf of those whom we represent, our firm and decided support in such measures as may best tend to confirm the signal advantages which have been obtained to the common cause in the course of the last campaign, and to conduct the great contest in which his majesty is engaged to a safe and honourable conclusion; and that, impressed with these sentiments, we shall not fail to make such provision as, under the present circumstances, may appear to be necessary for the several branches of the public service, and for the vigorous prosecution of the war." The address was supported by Mr. Canning and Mr. Pitt, and powerfully opposed by Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Erskine, and Mr. Fox. As soon as Mr. Pitt concluded his speech,

Mr. Fox rose and spoke as follows: Mr. Speaker, at so late an hour of the night I am sure you will do me the justice to believe that I do not mean to go at length into the discussion of this great question. Exhausted as the attention of the House must be, and unaccustomed as I have been of late to attend in my place, nothing but a deep sense of my duty could have induced me to trouble you at all, and particularly to request your indulgence at such an hour.

Sir, my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) has truly said that the present is a new era in the war. The right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer feels the justice of the remark; for by travelling back to the commencement of the war, and referring to all the topics and arguments which he has so often and so successfully urged to the House, and by which he has drawn them to the support of his measures, he is forced to acknowledge that, at the end of 'a seven years' conflict, we are come but to a new era in the war, at which he thinks it necessary only to press all his former arguments to induce us to persevere. All the topics which have so often misled us—all the reasoning which has so invariably failed—all the lofty predictions which have so constantly been falsified by events—all the hopes which have amused the sanguine, and all the assurances of the distress and weakness of the enemy which have satisfied the unthinking, are again enumerated and advanced as arguments for our continuing the war. What! at the end of seven years of the most burdensome and the most calamitous struggle that this country was ever engaged in, are we again to be amused with notions of finance and calculations.



of the exhausted resources of the enemy as a ground of confidence and of hope? Gracious God! Were we not told, five years ago, that France was not only on the brink, but that she was actually in the gulf of bankruptcy? Were we not told, as an unanswerable argument against treating, that she could not hold out another campaign—that nothing but peace could save her—that she wanted only time to recruit her exhausted finances—that to grant her repose was to grant her the means of again molesting this country, and that we had nothing to do but persevere for a short time in order to save ourselves for ever from the consequences of her ambition and her Jacobinism? What! after having gone on from year to year upon assurances like these, and after having seen the repeated refutations of every prediction, are we again to be seriously told that we have the same prospect of success on the same identical grounds? And without any other argument or security are we invited, at this new era of the war, to carry it on upon principles which, if adopted, may make it eternal? If the right honourable gentleman shall succeed in prevailing on parliament and the country to adopt the principles which he has advanced this night, I see no possible termination to the contest. No man can see an end to it; and upon the assurances and predictions which have so uniformly failed are we called upon, not merely to refuse all negotiation, but to countenance principles and views as distant from wisdom and justice as they are in their nature wild and impracticable.

I must lament, Sir, in common with every friend of peace, the harsh and unconciliating language which ministers have held towards the French, and which they have even made use of in their answer to a respectful offer of negotiation. Such language has ever been considered as extremely unwise, and has ever been reprobated by diplomatic men. I remember with pleasure the terms in which Lord Malmesbury at Paris, in the year 1796, replied to expressions of this sort used by M. de la Croix. He justly said "that offensive and injurious insinuations were only calculated to throw new obstacles in the way of accommodation, and that it was not by revolting reproaches, nor by reciprocal invective, that a sincere wish to accomplish the great work of pacification could be evinced." Nothing could be more proper nor more wise than this language; and such ought ever to be the tone and conduct of men entrusted with the very important task of treating with a hostile nation. Being a sincere friend to peace, I must say with Lord Malmes-

bury that it is not by reproaches and by invective that we can hope for a reconciliation; and I am convinced in my own mind that I speak the sense of this House, and of a majority of the people of this country, when I lament that any unnecessary recriminations should be flung out by which obstacles are put in the way of pacification. I believe that it is the prevailing sentiment of the people that we ought to abstain from harsh and insulting language; and in common with them I must lament that, both in the papers of Lord Grenville, and in the speeches of this night, such licence has been given to invective and reproach. For the same reason I must lament that the right honourable gentleman has thought proper to go at such length, and with such severity of minute investigation, into all the early circumstances of the war, which, whatever they were, are nothing to the present purpose, and ought not to influence the present feelings of the House.

I certainly shall not follow him into all the minute detail, though I do not agree with him in many of his assertions. I do not know what impression his narrative may make on other gentlemen; but I will tell him, fairly and candidly, he has not convinced me. I continue to think, and until I see better grounds for changing my opinion than any that the right honourable gentleman has this night produced, I shall continue to think and to say, plainly and explicitly, that this country was the aggressor in the war. But with regard to Austria and Prussia—is there a man who, for one moment, can dispute that they were the aggressors? It will be vain for the right honourable gentleman to enter into long and plausible reasoning against the evidence of documents so clear, so decisive—so frequently, so thoroughly investigated. The unfortunate Louis XVI. himself, as well as those who were in his confidence, have borne decisive testimony to the fact that between him and the emperor there was an intimate correspondence and a perfect understanding. Do I mean by this that a positive treaty was entered into for the dismemberment of France? Certainly not, but no man can read the declarations which were made at Mantua, as well as at Pilnitz, as they are given by M. Bertrand de Moleville, without acknowledging that there was not merely an intention, but a declaration of an intention, on the part of the great powers of Germany, to interfere in the internal affairs of France for the purpose of regulating the government against the opinion of the people. This, though not a plan for the partition of France, was, in the eye of reason and common

sense, an aggression against France. The right honourable gentleman denies that there was such a thing as a treaty of Pilnitz. Granted. But was there not a declaration which amounted to an act of hostile aggression? The two powers, the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia, made a public declaration that they were determined to employ their forces, in conjunction with those of the other sovereigns of Europe, "to put the King of France in a situation to establish, in perfect liberty, the foundations of a monarchical government, equally agreeable to the rights of sovereigns and the welfare of the French." Whenever the other princes should agree to co-operate with them, "then, and in that case, their majesties were determined to act promptly, and by mutual consent, with the forces necessary to obtain the end proposed by all of them. In the meantime they declared that they would give orders for their troops to be ready for actual service." Now, I would ask gentlemen to lay hands upon their hearts and say what the fair construction of this declaration was—whether it was not a menace and an insult to France, since, in direct terms, it declared that whenever the other powers should concur they would attack France, then at peace with them, and then employed only in domestic and internal regulations? Let us suppose the case to be that of Great Britain. Will any gentleman say, if two of the great powers should make a public declaration that they were determined to make an attack on this kingdom as soon as circumstances should favour their intention; that they only waited for this occasion; and that in the meantime they would keep their forces ready for the purpose; that it would not be considered by the parliament and people of this country as an hostile aggression? And is there an Englishman in existence who is such a friend to peace as to say that the nation could retain its honour and dignity if it should sit down under such a menace? I know too well what is due to the national character of England to believe that there would be two opinions on the case if thus put home to our own feelings and understanding. We must, then, respect in others the indignation which such an act would excite in ourselves; and when we see it established on the most indisputable testimony that both at Pilnitz and at Mantua declarations were made to this effect, it is idle to say that, as far as the emperor and the King of Prussia were concerned, they were not the aggressors in the war.

"Oh! but the decree of the 19th of November, 1792! that,

at least," the right honourable gentleman says, "you must allow to be an act of aggression, not only against England, but against all the sovereigns of Europe." I am not one of those, Sir, who attach much interest to the general and indiscriminate provocations thrown out at random, like this resolution of the 19th of November, 1792. I do not think it necessary to the dignity of any people to notice and to apply to themselves menaces flung out without particular allusion, which are always unwise in the power which uses them, and which it is still more unwise to treat with seriousness. But, if any such idle and general provocation to nations is given, either in insolence or in folly, by any government, it is a clear first principle that an explanation is the thing, which a magnanimous nation, feeling itself aggrieved, ought to demand; and if an explanation be given which is not satisfactory, it ought clearly and distinctly to say so. There ought to be no ambiguity, no reserve, on the occasion. Now, we all know from documents on our table that M. Chauvelin did give an explanation of this silly decree. He declared in the name of his government "that it was never meant that the French government should favour insurrections; that the decree was applicable only to those people who, after having acquired their liberty by conquest, should demand the assistance of the republic; but that France would respect, not only the independence of England, but also that of her allies with whom she was not at war." This was the explanation given of the offensive decree. "But this explanation was not satisfactory!" Did you say so to M. Chauvelin? Did you tell him that you were not content with this explanation? And when you dismissed him afterwards, on the death of the king, did you say that this explanation was unsatisfactory? No; you did no such thing: and I contend that unless you demanded further explanations, and they were refused, you have no right to urge the decree of the 19th of November as an act of aggression. In all your conferences and correspondence with M. Chauvelin, did you hold out to him what terms would satisfy you? Did you give the French the power or the means of settling the misunderstanding which that decree, or any other of the points at issue, had created? I contend that when a nation refuses to state to another the thing which would satisfy her, she shows that she is not actuated by a desire to preserve peace between them: and I aver that this was the case here. The Scheldt, for instance. You now say that the navigation of the Scheldt was one of your causes

of complaint. Did you explain yourself on that subject? Did you make it one of the grounds for the dismissal of M. Chauvelin? Sir, I repeat it, a nation to justify itself in appealing to the last solemn resort ought to prove that it had taken every possible means, consistent with dignity, to demand the reparation which would be satisfactory, and if she refused to explain what would be satisfactory, she did not do her duty, nor exonerate herself from the charge of being the aggressor.

The right honourable gentleman has this night, for the first time, produced a most important paper—the instructions which were given to his majesty's minister at the court of St. Petersburg, about the end of the year 1792, to interest her imperial majesty to join her efforts with those of his Britannic majesty to prevent, by their joint mediation, the evils of a general war. Of this paper, and of the existence of any such document, I for one was entirely ignorant; but I have no hesitation in saying that I completely approve of the instructions which appear to have been given; and I am sorry to see the right honourable gentleman disposed rather to take blame to himself than credit for having written it. He thinks that he shall be subject to the imputation of having been rather too slow to apprehend the dangers with which the French Revolution was fraught, than that he was forward and hasty—“*Quod solum excusat, hoc solum miror in illo.*” I do not agree with him on the idea of censure. I by no means think that he was blameable for too much confidence in the good intentions of the French. I think the tenor and composition of this paper was excellent—the instructions conveyed in it wise; and that it wanted but one essential thing to have entitled it to general approbation—namely, to be acted upon. The clear nature and intent of that paper, I take to be, that our ministers were to solicit the court of Petersburg to join with them in a declaration to the French government, stating explicitly what course of conduct, with respect to their foreign relations, they thought necessary to the general peace and security of Europe, and what, if complied with, would have induced them to mediate for that purpose—a proper, wise, and legitimate course of proceeding. Now, I ask, Sir, whether, if this paper had been communicated to Paris at the end of the year 1792, instead of Petersburg, it would not have been productive of most seasonable benefits to mankind; and, by informing the French in time of the means by which they might have secured the mediation of Great Britain, have not only avoided the rupture with this country,

but have also restored general peace to the continent? The paper, Sir, was excellent in its intentions; but its merit was all in the composition. It was a fine theory, which ministers did not think proper to carry into practice. Nay, on the contrary, at the very time they were drawing up this paper, they were insulting M. Chauvelin in every way, until about the 23rd or 24th of January, 1793, when they finally dismissed him, without stating any one ground upon which they were willing to preserve terms with the French.

"But France," it seems, "then declared war against us; and she was the aggressor, because the declaration came from her." Let us look at the circumstances of this transaction on both sides. Undoubtedly, the declaration was made by her; but is a declaration the only thing that constitutes the commencement of a war? Do gentlemen recollect that, in consequence of a dispute about the commencement of war respecting the capture of a number of ships, an article was inserted in our treaty with France, by which it was positively stipulated that in future, to prevent all disputes, the act of the dismissal of a minister from either of the two courts should be held and considered as tantamount to a declaration of war? I mention this, Sir, because when we are idly employed in this retrospect of the origin of a war which has lasted so many years, instead of fixing our eyes only to the contemplation of the means of putting an end to it, we seem disposed to overlook everything on our own parts, and to search only for grounds of imputation on the enemy. I almost think it an insult on the House to detain them with this sort of examination. If, Sir, France was the aggressor, as the right honourable gentleman says she was throughout, why did not Prussia call upon us for the stipulated number of troops, according to the article of the defensive treaty of alliance subsisting between us, by which, in case either of the contracting parties was attacked, they had a right to demand the stipulated aid? And the same thing, again, may be asked when we were attacked. The right honourable gentleman might here accuse himself, indeed, of reserve; but it unfortunately happened that, at the time, the point was too clear on which side the aggression lay. Prussia was too sensible that the war could not entitle her to make the demand, and that it was not a case within the scope of the defensive treaty. This is evidence worth a volume of subsequent reasoning; for if, at the time when all the facts were present to their minds, they could not take advantage of existing treaties, and that,

too, when the courts were on the most friendly terms with one another, it will be manifest to every thinking man that they were sensible they were not authorised to make the demand.

I really, Sir, cannot think it necessary to follow the right honourable gentleman into all the minute details which he has thought proper to give us respecting the first aggression; but, that Austria and Prussia were the aggressors, not a man in any country, who has ever given himself the trouble to think at all on the subject, can doubt. Nothing could be more hostile than their whole proceedings. Did they not declare to France that it was their internal concerns, not their external proceedings, which provoked them to confederate against her? Read the declarations which they made themselves to justify their appeal to arms. They did not pretend to fear their ambition, their conquests, their troubling their neighbours; but they accused them of new-modelling their own government. They said nothing of their aggressions abroad; they spoke only of their clubs and societies at Paris.

Sir, in all this I am not justifying the French—I am not striving to absolve them from blame, either in their internal or external policy. I think, on the contrary, that their successive rulers have been as bad and as execrable, in various instances, as any of the most despotic and unprincipled governments that the world ever saw. I think it impossible, Sir, that it should have been otherwise. It was not to be expected that the French, when once engaged in foreign wars, should not endeavour to spread destruction around them, and to form plans of aggrandisement and plunder on every side. Men bred in the school of the house of Bourbon could not be expected to act otherwise. They could not have lived so long under their ancient masters without imbibing the restless ambition, the perfidy, and the insatiable spirit of the race. They have imitated the practice of their great prototype, and, through their whole career of mischief and of crimes, have done no more than servilely trace the steps of their own Louis XIV. If they have overrun countries and ravaged them, they have done it upon Bourbon principles. If they have ruined and dethroned sovereigns, it is entirely after the Bourbon manner. If they have even fraternised with the people of foreign countries, and pretended to make their cause their own, they have only faithfully followed the Bourbon example. They have constantly had Louis, the *grand monarque*, in their eye. But it may be said

that this example was long ago, and that we ought not to refer to a period so distant. True, it is a distant period as applied to the man, but not so to the principle. The principle was never extinct; nor has its operation been suspended in France, except, perhaps, for a short interval during the administration of Cardinal Fleury; and my complaint against the republic of France is not that she has generated new crimes, not that she has promulgated new mischief, but that she has adopted and acted upon the principles which have been so fatal to Europe under the practice of the house of Bourbon. It is said that wherever the French have gone they have introduced revolution; that they have sought for the means of disturbing neighbouring states, and have not been content with mere conquest. What is this but adopting the ingenious scheme of Louis XIV.? He was not content with merely overrunning a state; whenever he came into a new territory, he established what he called his chamber of claims; a most convenient device, by which he inquired whether the conquered country or province had any dormant or disputed claims, any cause of complaint, any unsettled demand upon any other state or province—upon which he might wage war upon such state, thereby discover again ground for new devastation, and gratify his ambition by new acquisitions. What have the republicans done more atrocious, more Jacobinical, than this? Louis went to war with Holland. His pretext was that Holland had not treated him with sufficient respect; a very just and proper cause for war indeed! This, Sir, leads me to an example which I think seasonable, and worthy the attention of his majesty's ministers. When our Charles II. as a short exception to the policy of his reign made the triple alliance for the protection of Europe, and particularly of Holland, against the ambition of Louis XIV., what was the conduct of that great, virtuous, and most able statesman, M. de Witt, when the confederates came to deliberate on the terms upon which they should treat with the French monarch? When it was said that he had made unprincipled conquests, and that he ought to be forced to surrender them all, what was the language of that great and wise man? "No," said he; "I think we ought not to look back to the origin of the war, so much as the means of putting an end to it. If you had united in time to prevent these conquests, well; but now that he has made them, he stands upon the ground of conquest, and we must agree to treat with him, not with reference to the origin of the conquest, but with regard



to his present posture. He has those places, and some of them we must be content to give up as the means of peace; for conquest will always successfully set up its claims to indemnification." Such was the language of this minister, who was, the ornament of his time; and such, in my mind, ought to be the language of statesmen with regard to the French at this day. The same ought to have been said at the formation of the confederacy. It was true that the French had overrun Savoy; but they had overrun it upon Bourbon principles; and having gained this and other conquests before the confederacy was formed, they ought to have treated with her rather for future security than for past correction. States in possession, whether monarchical or republican, will claim indemnity in proportion to their success; and it will never be so much inquired by what right they gained possession as by what means they can be prevented from enlarging their depredations. Such is the safe practice of the world; and such ought to have been the conduct of the powers when the reduction of Savoy made them coalesce.

The right honourable gentleman may know more of the secret particulars of their overrunning Savoy than I do; but certainly, as they have come to my knowledge, it was a most Bourbon-like act. A great and justly celebrated historian, whom I will not call a foreigner—I mean Mr. Hume (a writer certainly estimable in many particulars, but who was a childish lover of princes)—talks of Louis XIV. in very magnificent terms; but he says of him that, though he managed his enterprises with skill and bravery, he was unfortunate in this, that he never got a good and fair pretence for war. This he reckons among his misfortunes! Can we say more of the republican French? In seizing on Savoy, I think they made use of the words, "*convenances morales et physiques*." These were their reasons. A most Bourbon-like phrase! And I therefore contend that as we never scrupled to treat with the princes of the house of Bourbon on account of their rapacity, their thirst of conquest, their violation of treaties, their perfidy, and their restless spirit, so we ought not to refuse to treat with their republican imitators. Ministers could not pretend ignorance of the unprincipled manner in which the French had seized on Savoy. The Sardinian minister complained of the aggression, and yet no stir was made about it. The courts of Europe stood by and saw the outrage; and our ministers saw it. The right honourable gentleman will in vain, therefore, exert his

powers to persuade me of the interest he takes in the preservation of the rights of nations, since, at the moment when an interference might have been made with effect, no step was taken, no remonstrance made, no mediation negotiated, to stop the career of conquest. All the pretended and hypocritical sensibility for the "rights of nations and for social order," with which we have since been stunned, cannot impose upon those who will take the trouble to look back to the period when this sensibility ought to have roused us into seasonable exertion. At that time, however, the right honourable gentleman makes it his boast that he was prevented, by a sense of neutrality, from taking any measures of precaution on the subject. I do not give the right honourable gentleman much credit for his spirit of neutrality on the occasion. It flowed from the sense of the country at the time, the great majority of which was clearly and decidedly against all interruptions being given to the French in their desire of regulating their own internal government.

But this neutrality, which respected only the internal rights of the French, and from which the people of England would never have departed but from the impolitic and hypocritical cant which was set up to rouse their jealousy and alarm their fears, was very different from the great principle of political prudence which ought to have actuated the councils of the nation on seeing the first steps of France towards a career of external conquest. My opinion is that when the unfortunate King of France offered to us, in the letter delivered by M. Chauvelin and M. Talleyrand, and even entreated us to mediate between him and the allied powers of Austria and Prussia, they ought to have accepted the offer and exerted their influence to save Europe from the consequence of a system which was then beginning to manifest itself. It was, at least, a question of prudence; and as we had never refused to treat and to mediate with the old princes on account of their ambition or their perfidy, we ought to have been equally ready now, when the same principles were acted upon by other men. I must doubt the sensibility which could be so cold and so indifferent at the proper moment for its activity. I fear that there were at that moment the germs of ambition rising in the mind of the right honourable gentleman, and that he was beginning, like others, to entertain hopes that something might be obtained out of the coming confusion. What but such a sentiment could have prevented him from overlooking the fair

occasion that was offered for preventing the calamities with which Europe was threatened? What but some such interested principle could have made him forgo the truly honourable task by which his administration would have displayed its magnanimity and its power? But for some such feeling, would not this country, both in wisdom and in dignity, have interfered, and in conjunction with the other powers have said to France, "You ask for a mediation; we will mediate with candour and sincerity, but we will at the same time declare to you our apprehensions. We do not trust to your assertion of a determination to avoid all foreign conquest, and that you are desirous only of settling your own constitution, because your language is contradicted by experience and the evidence of facts: You are Frenchmen, and you cannot so soon have thrown off the Bourbon principles in which you were educated. You have already imitated the bad practice of your princes; you have seized on Savoy, without a colour of right. But here we take our stand. Thus far you have gone, and we cannot help it; but you must go no farther. We will tell you distinctly what we shall consider as an attack on the balance and the security of Europe; and, as the condition of our interference, we will tell you also the securities that we think essential to the general repose." This ought to have been the language of his majesty's ministers when their mediation was solicited; and something of this kind they evidently thought of when they sent the instructions to Petersburg which they have mentioned this night, but upon which they never acted. Having not done so, I say, they have no claim to talk now about the violated rights of Europe, about the aggression of the French, and about the origin of the war in which this country was so suddenly afterwards plunged. Instead of this, what did they do? They hung back; they avoided explanation; they gave the French no means of satisfying them; and I repeat my proposition—when there is a question of peace and war between two nations, that government feels itself in the wrong which refuses to state with clearness and precision what she would consider as a satisfaction and a pledge of peace.

Sir, if I understand the true precepts of the Christian religion as set forth in the New Testament, I must be permitted to say that there is no such thing as a rule or doctrine by which we are directed, or can be justified, in waging a war for religion. The idea is subversive of the very foundations upon which it stands, which are those of peace and good-will among

men. Religion never was, and never can be, a justifiable cause of war; but it has been too often grossly used as the pretext and the apology for the most unprincipled wars.

- I have already said, and I repeat it, that the conduct of the French to foreign nations cannot be justified. They have given great cause of offence, but certainly not to all countries alike. The right honourable gentlemen opposite to me have made an indiscriminate catalogue of all the countries which the French have offended, and, in their eagerness to throw odium on the nation, have taken no pains to investigate the sources of their several quarrels. I will not detain the House by entering into the long detail which has been given of their aggressions and their violences; but let me mention Sardinia as one instance which has been strongly insisted upon. Did the French attack Sardinia when at peace with them? No such thing. The King of Sardinia had accepted of a subsidy from Great Britain; and Sardinia was, to all intents and purposes, a belligerent power. Several other instances might be mentioned; but though, perhaps, in the majority of instances the French may be unjustifiable, is this the moment for us to dwell upon these enormities—to waste our time, and inflame our passions, by recriminating upon each other? There is no end to such a war. I have somewhere read, I think in Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*, of a most bloody and fatal battle which was fought by two opposite armies, in which almost all the combatants on both sides were killed, "because," says the historian, "though they had offensive weapons on both sides, they had none for defence." So, in this war of words, if we are to use only offensive weapons, if we are to indulge only in invective and abuse, the contest must be eternal. If this war of reproach and invective is to be countenanced, may not the French with equal reason complain of the outrages and the horrors committed by the powers opposed to them? If we must not treat with the French on account of the iniquity of their former transactions, ought we not to be as scrupulous of connecting ourselves with other powers equally criminal? Surely, Sir, if we must be thus rigid in scrutinising the conduct of an enemy, we ought to be equally careful in not committing our honour and our safety with an ally who has manifested the same want of respect for the rights of other nations. Surely, if it is material to know the character of a power with whom you are only about to treat for peace, it is more material to know the character of allies with whom you are about to

enter into the closest connection of friendship, and for whose exertions you are about to pay.

Now, Sir, what was the conduct of your own allies to Poland? Is there a single atrocity of the French in Italy, in Switzerland, in Egypt, if you please, more unprincipled and inhuman than that of Russia, Austria, and Prussia in Poland? What has there been in the conduct of the French to foreign powers; what in the violation of solemn treaties; what in the plunder, devastation, and dismemberment of unoffending countries; what in the horrors and murders perpetrated upon the subdued victims of their rage in any district which they have overrun, worse than the conduct of those three great powers in the miserable, devoted, and trampled-on kingdom of Poland, and who have been, or are, our allies in this war for religion, social order, and the rights of nations? "Oh! but we regretted the partition of Poland!" Yes, regretted! you regretted the violence, and that is all you did. You united yourselves with the actors; you, in fact, by your acquiescence, confirmed the atrocity. But they are your allies; and though they overran and divided Poland, there was nothing, perhaps, in the manner of doing it which stamped it with peculiar infamy and disgrace. The hero of Poland, perhaps, was merciful and mild! He was "as much superior to Bonaparte in bravery, and in the discipline which he maintained, as he was superior in virtue and humanity! He was animated by the purest principles of Christianity, and was restrained in his career by the benevolent precepts which it inculcates!" Was he? Let unfortunate Warsaw, and the miserable inhabitants of the suburb of Praga in particular, tell! What do we understand to have been the conduct of this magnanimous hero, with whom, it seems, Bonaparte is not to be compared? He entered the suburb of Praga, the most populous suburb of Warsaw; and there he let his soldiery loose on the miserable, unarmed and unresisting people! Men, women, and children, nay, infants at the breast, were doomed to one indiscriminate massacre! Thousands of them were inhumanly, wantonly butchered! And for what? Because they had dared to join in a wish to meliorate their own condition as a people, and to improve their constitution, which had been confessed by their own sovereign to be in want of amendment. And such is the hero upon whom the cause of "religion and social order" is to repose! And such is the man whom we praise for his discipline and his virtue, and whom we hold out as our boast and our dependence,

while the conduct of Bonaparte unfits him to be even treated with as an enemy!

But the behaviour of the French towards Switzerland raises all the indignation of the right honourable gentleman and inflames his eloquence. I admire the indignation which he expresses (and I think he felt it) in speaking of this country, so dear and so congenial to every man who loves the sacred name of liberty. He who loves liberty, says the right honourable gentleman, thought himself at home on the favoured and happy mountains of Switzerland, where she seemed to have taken up her abode under a sort of implied compact, among all other states, that she should not be disturbed in this her chosen asylum. I admire the eloquence of the right honourable gentleman in speaking of this country of liberty and peace, to which every man would desire, once in his life at least, to make a pilgrimage. But who, let me ask him, first proposed to the Swiss people to depart from the neutrality which was their chief protection, and to join the confederacy against the French? I aver that a noble relation of mine (Lord Robert Fitzgerald), then the minister of England to the Swiss cantons, was instructed, in direct terms, to propose to the Swiss, by an official note, to break from the safe line they had laid down for themselves, and to tell them "in such a contest neutrality was criminal." I know that noble lord too well, though I have not been in habits of intercourse with him of late from the employments in which he has been engaged, to suspect that he would have presented such a paper without the express instructions of his court, or that he would have gone beyond those instructions.

But was it only to Switzerland that this sort of language was held? What was our language also to Tuscany and to Genoa? An honourable gentleman (Mr. Canning) has denied the authenticity of a pretended letter which has been circulated, and ascribed to Lord Harvey. He says it is all a fable and a forgery. Be it so; but is it also a fable that Lord Harvey did speak in terms to the Grand Duke which he considered as offensive and insulting? I cannot tell, for I was not present. But was it not, and is it not believed? Is it a fable that Lord Harvey went into the closet of the Grand Duke, laid his watch upon the table, and demanded, in a peremptory manner, that he should, within a certain number of minutes—I think I have heard within a quarter of an hour—determine, ay or no, to dismiss the French minister, and order him out of his dominions; with the menace that, if he did not, the English fleet should

bombard Leghorn? Will the honourable gentleman deny this also? I certainly do not know it from my own knowledge; but I know that persons of the first credit, then at Florence, have stated these facts, and that they have never been contradicted. It is true that, upon the Grand Duke's complaint of this indignity, Lord Harvey was recalled; but was the principle recalled? Was the mission recalled? Did not ministers persist in the demand which Lord Harvey had made, perhaps ungraciously? Was not the Grand Duke forced, in consequence, to dismiss the French minister? and did they not drive him to enter into an unwilling war with the republic? It is true that he afterwards made his peace; and that, having done so, he was treated severely and unjustly by the French. But what do I conclude from all this but that we have no right to be scrupulous, we who have violated the respect due to peaceable powers ourselves in this war which, more than any other that ever afflicted human nature, has been distinguished by the greatest number of disgusting and outrageous insults to the smaller powers by the great. And I infer from this also that the instances not being confined to the French, but having been perpetrated by every one of the allies, and by England as much as by the others, we have no right to refuse to treat with the French on this ground. Need I speak of your conduct to Genoa also? Perhaps the note delivered by Mr. Drake was also a forgery. Perhaps the blockade of the port never took place. It is impossible to deny the facts, which were so glaring at the time. It is a painful thing to me, Sir, to be obliged to go back to these unfortunate periods of the history of this war, and of the conduct of this country; but I am forced to the task by the use which has been made of the atrocities of the French as an argument against negotiation. I think I have said enough to prove that if the French have been guilty, we have not been innocent. Nothing but determined incredulity can make us deaf and blind to our own acts when we are so ready to yield an assent to all the reproaches which are thrown out on the enemy, and upon which reproaches we are gravely told to continue the war.

"But the French," it seems, "have behaved ill everywhere. They seized on Venice, which had preserved the most exact neutrality, or rather," as it is hinted, "had manifested symptoms of friendship to them." I agree with the right honourable gentleman, it was an abominable act. I am not the apologist of, much less the advocate for, their iniquities; neither will I

countenance them in their pretences for the injustice. I do not think that much regard is to be paid to the charges which a triumphant soldiery bring on the conduct of a people whom they have overrun. Pretences for outrage will never be wanting to the strong when they wish to trample on the weak; but when we accuse the French of having seized on Venice, after stipulating for its neutrality and guaranteeing its independence, we should also remember the excuse that they made for the violence; namely, that their troops had been attacked and murdered. I say I am always incredulous about such excuses; but I think it fair to hear whatever can be alleged on the other side. We cannot take one side of a story only. Candour demands that we should examine the whole before we make up our minds on the guilt. I cannot think it quite fair to state the view of the subject of one party as indisputable fact without even mentioning what the other party has to say for itself. But, Sir, is this all? Though the perfidy of the French to the Venetians be clear and palpable, was it worse in morals, in principle, and in example than the conduct of Austria? My honourable friend (Mr. Whitbread) properly asked, "Is not the receiver as bad as the thief?" If the French seized on the territory of Venice, did not the Austrians agree to receive it? "But this," it seems, "is not the same thing." It is quite in the nature and within the rule of diplomatic morality for Austria to receive the country which was thus seized upon unjustly. "The emperor took it as a compensation; it was his by barter; he was not answerable for the guilt by which it was obtained." What is this, Sir, but the false and abominable reasoning with which we have been so often disgusted on the subject of the slave trade? Just in the same manner have I heard a notorious wholesale dealer in this inhuman traffic justify his abominable trade. "I am not guilty of the horrible crime of tearing that mother from her infants; that husband from his wife; of depopulating that village; of depriving that family of their sons, the support of their aged parent! No: thank Heaven! I am not guilty of this horror; I only bought them in the fair way of trade. They were brought to the market; they had been guilty of crimes, or they had been made prisoners in war; they were accused of witchcraft, of *obi*, or of some other sort of sorcery; and they were brought to me for sale; I gave a valuable consideration for them; but God forbid that I should have stained my soul with the guilt of dragging them from their friends and families!" Such has been the precious defence



of the slave trade; and such is the argument set up for Austria in this instance of Venice. "I did not commit the crime of trampling on the independence of Venice. I did not seize on the city; I gave a *quid pro quo*. It was a matter of barter and indemnity; I gave half a million of human beings to be put under the yoke of France in another district, and I had these people turned over to me in return!" This, Sir, is the defence of Austria; and under such detestable sophistry as this is the infernal traffic in human flesh, whether in white or black, to be continued, and even justified! At no time has that diabolical traffic been carried to a greater length than during the present war; and that by England herself, as well as Austria and Russia.

"But France," it seems, "has roused all the nations of Europe against her"; and the long catalogue has been read to you, to prove that she must have been atrocious to provoke them all. Is it true, Sir, that she has roused them all? It does not say much for the address of his majesty's ministers if this be the case. What, Sir! have all your negotiations, all your declamation, all your money, been squandered in vain? Have you not succeeded in stirring the indignation and engaging the assistance of a single power? But you do yourselves injustice. I dare say the truth lies between you. Between their crimes and your money the rage has been excited; and full as much is due to your seductions as to her atrocities. My honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) was correct, therefore, in his argument; for you cannot take both sides of the case: you cannot accuse them of having provoked all Europe, and at the same time claim the merit of having roused them to join you.

You talk of your allies. Sir, I wish to know who your allies are? Russia is one of them, I suppose. Did France attack Russia? Has the magnanimous Paul taken the field for social order and religion on account of personal aggression? The Emperor of Russia has declared himself Grand Master of Malta, though his religion is as opposite to that of the knights as ours is; and he is as much considered an heretic by the church of Rome as we are. The King of Great Britain might with as much propriety declare himself the head of the order of the Chartreuse monks. Not content with taking to himself the commandery of this institution of Malta, Paul has even created a married man a knight, contrary to all the most sacred rules and regulations of the order. And yet this ally of ours is fighting for religion! So much for his religion: let us see his regard

to social order! How does he show his abhorrence of the principles of the French in their violation of the rights of other nations? What has been his conduct to Denmark? He says to Denmark, "You have seditious clubs at Copenhagen—no Danish vessel shall enter the ports of Russia!" He holds a still more, despotic language to Hamburg. He threatens to lay an embargo on their trade; and he forces them to surrender up men who are claimed by the French as their citizens—whether truly or not, I do not inquire. He threatens them with his own vengeance if they refuse, and subjects them to that of the French if they comply. And what has been his conduct to Spain? He first sends away the Spanish minister from Petersburg, and then complains, as a great insult, that his minister was dismissed from Madrid! This is one of our allies; and he has declared that the object for which he has taken up arms is to replace the ancient race of the house of Bourbon on the throne of France, and that he does this for the cause of religion and social order! Such is the respect for religion and social order which he himself displays; and such are the examples of it with which we coalesce!

No man regrets, Sir, more than I do the enormities that France has committed; but how do they bear upon the question as it now stands? Are we for ever to deprive ourselves of the benefits of peace because France has perpetrated acts of injustice? Sir, we cannot acquit ourselves upon such ground. We have negotiated. With the knowledge of these acts of injustice and disorder, we have treated with them twice; yet the right honourable gentleman cannot enter into negotiation with them now; and it is worth while to attend to the reasons that he gives for refusing their offer. The Revolution itself is no more an objection now than it was in 1796, when he did negotiate; for the government of France at that time was surely as unstable as it is now. The crimes of the French, the instability of their government, did not then prevent him; and why are they to prevent him now? He negotiated with a government as unstable, and, baffled in that negotiation, he did not scruple to open another at Lisle in 1797. We have heard a very curious account of these negotiations this day, and, as the right honourable gentleman has emphatically told us, an "honest" account of them. He says he has no scruple in avowing that he apprehended danger from the success of his own efforts to procure a pacification, and that he was not displeased at its failure. He was sincere in his endeavours to treat, but he was not

disappointed when they failed. I wish to understand the right honourable gentleman correctly. His declaration on the subject, then, I take to be this—that though sincere in his endeavours to procure peace in 1797, yet he apprehended greater danger from accomplishing his object than from the continuance of war; and that he felt this apprehension from the comparative views of the probable state of peace and war at that time. I have no hesitation in allowing the fact that a state of peace, immediately after a war of such violence, must, in some respects, be a state of insecurity; but does this not belong, in a certain degree, to all wars? And are we never to have peace because that peace may be insecure? But there was something, it seems, so peculiar in this war, and in the character and principles of the enemy, that the right honourable gentleman thought a peace in 1797 would be comparatively more dangerous than war. Why, then, did he treat? I beg the attention of the House to this—he treated “because the unequivocal sense of the people of England was declared to be in favour of a negotiation.” The right honourable gentleman confesses the truth, then, that in 1797 the people were for peace. I thought so at the time; but you all recollect that when I stated it in my place it was denied. “True,” they said, “you have procured petitions; but we have petitions too: we all know in what strange ways petitions may be procured, and how little they deserve to be considered as the sense of the people.” This was their language at the time; but now we find these petitions did speak the sense of the people, and that it was on this side of the House only that the sense of the people was spoken. The majority spoke a contrary language. It is acknowledged, then, that the unequivocal sense of the people of England may be spoken by the minority of this House, and that it is not always by the test of numbers that an honest decision is to be ascertained. This House decided against what the right honourable gentleman knew to be the sense of the country; but he himself acted upon that sense against the vote of parliament.

The negotiation in 1796 went off, as my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) has said, upon the question of Belgium; or, as the right honourable gentleman asserts, upon a question of principle. He negotiated to please the people, but it went off “on account of a monstrous principle advanced by France, incompatible with all negotiation.” This is now said. Did the right honourable gentleman say so at the time? Did he fairly and candidly inform the people of England that they

broke off the negotiation because the French had urged a basis that it was totally impossible for England at any time to grant? No such thing. On the contrary, when the negotiation broke off, they published a manifesto, "renewing, in the face of Europe, the solemn declaration that whenever the enemy should be disposed to enter on the work of a general pacification, in a spirit of conciliation and equity, nothing should be wanting on their part to contribute to the accomplishment of that great object." And accordingly, in 1797, notwithstanding this incompatible principle, and with all the enormities of the French on their heads, they opened a new negotiation at Lisle. They do not wait for any retractation of this incompatible principle; they do not wait even till overtures shall be made to them; but they solicit and renew a negotiation themselves. I do not blame them for this, Sir; I say only that it is an argument against the assertion of an incompatible principle. It is a proof that they did not then think as the right honourable gentleman now says they thought; but that they yielded to the sentiments of the nation, who were generally inclined to peace, against their own judgment; and, from a motive which I shall come to by and by, they had no hesitation, on account of the first rupture, to renew the negotiation—it was renewed at Lisle; and this the French broke off after the revolution at Paris on the 4th of September. What was the conduct of ministers upon this occasion? One would have thought that with the fresh insult at Lisle in their minds, with the recollection of their failure the year before at Paris, if it had been true that they found an incompatible principle, they would have talked a warlike language, and would have announced to their country and to all Europe that peace was not to be obtained; that they must throw away the scabbard, and think only of the means of continuing the contest. No such thing. They put forth a declaration, in which they said that they should look with anxious expectation for the moment when the government of France should show a disposition and spirit corresponding with their own; and renewing before all Europe the solemn declaration that at the very moment when the brilliant victory of Lord Duncan might have justified them in demanding more extravagant terms, they were willing, if the calamities of war could be closed, to conclude peace on the same moderate and equitable principles and terms which they had before proposed. Such was their declaration upon that occasion; and in the discussions which we had upon it in this House ministers were explicit.

They said that by that negotiation there had been given to the world what might be regarded as an unequivocal test of the sincerity and disposition of government towards peace, or against it; for those who refuse discussion show that they are disinclined to pacification; and it is therefore, they said, always to be considered as a test that the party who refuses to negotiate is the party who is disinclined to peace. This they themselves set up as the test. Try them now, Sir, by that test. An offer is made them. They rashly, and I think rudely, refuse it. Have they, or have they not, broken their own test?

But they say, "We have not refused all discussion." They have put a case. They have expressed a wish for the restoration of the house of Bourbon, and have declared that to be an event which would immediately remove every obstacle to negotiation. Sir, as to the restoration of the house of Bourbon, if it shall be the wish of the people of France, I for one shall be perfectly content to acquiesce. I think the people of France, as well as every other people, ought to have the government which they like best themselves; and the form of that government, or the persons who hold it in their hands, should never be an obstacle with me to treat with the nation for peace, or to live with them in amity—but as an Englishman, and actuated by English feelings, I surely cannot wish for the restoration of the house of Bourbon to the throne of France. I hope that I am not a man to bear heavily upon any unfortunate family. I feel for their situation—I respect their distresses—but as a friend of England I cannot wish for their restoration to the power which they abused. I cannot forget that the whole history of the century is little more than an account of the wars and the calamities arising from the restless ambition, the intrigues, and the perfidy of the house of Bourbon.

Sir, what is the question this night? We are called upon to support ministers in refusing a frank, candid, and respectful offer of negotiation, and to countenance them in continuing the war. Now, I would put the question in another way. Suppose ministers had been inclined to adopt the line of conduct which they pursued in 1796 and 1797, and that to-night, instead of a question on a war address, it had been an address to his majesty, to thank him for accepting the overture, and for opening a negotiation to treat for peace: I ask the gentlemen opposite—I appeal to the whole 558 representatives of the people—to lay their hands upon their hearts, and to say whether they would not have cordially voted for such an

address? Would they, or would they not? Yes, Sir, if the address had breathed a spirit of peace, your benches would have resounded with rejoicings, and with praises of a measure that was likely to bring back the blessings of tranquillity. On the present occasion, then, I ask for the vote of none but of those who, in the secret confession of their conscience, admit, at this instant, while they hear me, that they would have cheerfully and heartily voted with the minister for an address directly the reverse of this. If every such gentleman were to vote with me, I should be this night in the greatest majority that ever I had the honour to vote with in this House.

Sir, we have heard to-night a great many most acrimonious invectives against Bonaparte, against the whole course of his conduct, and against the unprincipled manner in which he seized upon the reins of government. I will not make his defence—I think all this sort of invective, which is used only to inflame the passions of this House and of the country, exceedingly ill-timed and very impolitic—but I say I will not make his defence. I am not sufficiently in possession of materials upon which to form an opinion on the character and conduct of this extraordinary man. Upon his arrival in France he found the government in a very unsettled state, and the whole affairs of the republic deranged, crippled, and involved. He thought it necessary to reform the government; and he did reform it, just in the way in which a military man may be expected to carry on a reform—he seized on the whole authority to himself. It will not be expected from me that I should either approve or apologise for such an act. I am certainly not for reforming governments by such expedients; but how this House can be so violently indignant at the idea of military despotism is, I own, a little singular when I see the composure with which they can observe it nearer home; nay, when I see them regard it as a frame of government most peculiarly suited to the exercise of free opinion, on a subject the most important of any that can engage the attention of a people. Was it not the system that was so happily and so advantageously established, of late, all over Ireland; and which, even now, the government may, at its pleasure, proclaim over the whole of that kingdom? Are not the persons and property of the people left, in many districts, at this moment to the entire will of military commanders? And is not this held out as peculiarly proper and advantageous, at a time when the people of Ireland are freely, and with unbiassed judgments, to discuss the most interesting question of a

legislative union? Notwithstanding the existence of martial law, so far do we think Ireland from being enslaved, that we think it precisely the period and the circumstances under which she may best declare her free opinion! Now, really, Sir, I cannot think that gentlemen who talk in this way about Ireland can, with a good grace, rail at military despotism in France.

But, it seems, "Bonaparte has broken his oaths. He has violated his oath of fidelity to the constitution of the year 3." Sir, I am not one of those who think that any such oaths ought ever to be exacted. They are seldom or ever of any effect; and I am not for sporting with a thing so sacred as an oath. I think it would be good to lay aside all such oaths. Whoever heard that, in revolutions, the oath of fidelity to the former government was ever regarded; or, even when violated, that it was imputed to the persons as a crime? In times of revolution, men who take up arms are called rebels; if they fail, they are adjudged to be traitors. But whoever heard before of their being perjured? On the restoration of Charles II., those who had taken up arms for the commonwealth were stigmatised as rebels and traitors, but not as men forsworn. Was the Earl of Devonshire charged with being perjured on account of the allegiance he had sworn to the house of Stuart, and the part he took in those struggles which preceded and brought about the Revolution? The violation of oaths of allegiance was never imputed to the people of England, and will never be imputed to any people. But who brings up the question of oaths? He who strives to make twenty-four millions of persons violate the oaths they have taken to their present constitution, and who desires to re-establish the house of Bourbon by such violation of their vows. I put it so, Sir; because, if the question of oaths be of the least consequence, it is equal on both sides. He who desires the whole people of France to perjure themselves, and who hopes for success in his project only upon their doing so, surely cannot make it a charge against Bonaparte that he has done the same.

"Ah! but Bonaparte has declared it as his opinion that the two governments of Great Britain and of France cannot exist together. After the treaty of Campo Formio, he sent two confidential persons, Berthier and Monge, to the directory, to say so in his name." Well, and what is there in this absurd and puerile assertion, if it was ever made? Has not the right honourable gentleman, in this House, said the same thing? In this, at least, they resemble one another. They have both made

use of this assertion; and I believe that these two illustrious persons are the only two on earth who think it. But let us turn the tables. We ought to put ourselves at times in the place of the enemy, if we are desirous of really examining with candour and fairness the dispute between us. How may they not interpret the speeches of ministers and their friends in both Houses of the British parliament? If we are to be told of the idle speech of Berthier and Monge, may they not also bring up speeches in which it has not been merely hinted, but broadly asserted, that "the two constitutions of England and France could not exist together"? May not these offences and charges be reciprocated without end? Are we ever to go on in this miserable squabble about words? Are we still, as we happen to be successful on the one side or other, to bring up these impotent accusations, insults, and provocations against each other; and only when we are beaten and unfortunate to think of treating? Oh! pity the condition of man, gracious God! and save us from such a system of malevolence, in which all our old and venerated prejudices are to be done away, and by which we are to be taught to consider war as the natural state of man, and peace but as a dangerous and difficult extremity!

Sir, this temper must be corrected. It is a diabolical spirit, and would lead to interminable war. Our history is full of instances that where we have overlooked a proffered occasion to treat we have uniformly suffered by delay. At what time did we ever profit by obstinately persevering in war? We accepted at Ryswick the terms we had refused five years before, and the same peace which was concluded at Utrecht might have been obtained at Gertruydenburg. And as to security from the future machinations or ambition of the French, I ask you, what security you ever had, or could have? Did the different treaties made with Louis XIV. serve to tie up his hands, to restrain his ambition, or to stifle his restless spirit? At what period could you safely repose in the honour, forbearance, and moderation of the French government? Was there ever an idea of refusing to treat because the peace might be afterwards insecure? The peace of 1763 was not accompanied with securities; and it was no sooner made than the French court began, as usual, its intrigues. And what security did the right honourable gentleman exact at the peace of 1783, in which he was engaged? Were we rendered secure by that peace? The right honourable gentleman knows well that soon after that peace the French formed a plan, in conjunction with the Dutch, of attacking our India



possessions, of raising up the native powers against us, and of driving us out of India; as the French are desirous of doing now—only with this difference, that the cabinet of France entered into this project in a moment of profound peace, and when they conceived us to be lulled into perfect security. After making the peace of 1783, the right honourable gentleman and his friends went out, and I, among others, came into office. Suppose, Sir, that we had taken up the jealousy upon which the right honourable gentleman now acts, and had refused to ratify the peace which he had made. Suppose that we had said, “No; France is acting a perfidious part—we see no security for England in this treaty—they want only a respite in order to attack us again in an important part of our dominions; and we ought not to confirm the treaty.” I ask, would the right honourable gentleman have supported us in this refusal? I say that upon his present reasoning he ought; but I put it fairly to him, would he have supported us in refusing to ratify the treaty upon such a pretence? He certainly ought not, and I am sure he would not; but the course of reasoning which he now assumes would have justified his taking such a ground. On the contrary, I am persuaded that he would have said: “This is a refinement upon jealousy. Security! You have security, the only security that you can ever expect to get. It is the present interest of France to make peace. She will keep it if it be her interest: she will break it if it be her interest: such is the state of nations; and you have nothing but your own vigilance for your security.”

“It is not the interest of Bonaparte,” it seems, “sincerely to enter into a negotiation, or, if he should even make peace, sincerely to keep it.” But how are we to decide upon his sincerity? By refusing to treat with him? Surely, if we mean to discover his sincerity, we ought to hear the propositions which he desires to make. “But peace would be unfriendly to his system of military despotism.” Sir, I hear a great deal about the short-lived nature of military despotism. I wish the history of the world would bear gentlemen out in this description of military despotism. Was not the government erected by Augustus Cæsar a military despotism? And yet it endured for six or seven hundred years. Military despotism, unfortunately, is too likely in its nature to be permanent, and it is not true that it depends on the life of the first usurper. Though half the Roman emperors were murdered, yet the military despotism went on; and so it would be, I fear, in France. If

Bonaparte should disappear from the scene, to make room, perhaps, for a Berthier, or any other general, what difference would that make in the quality of French despotism, or in our relation to the country? We may as safely treat with a Bonaparte, or with any of his successors, be they who they may, as we could with a Louis XVI., a Louis XVII., or a Louis XVIII. There is no difference but in the name. Where the power essentially resides, thither we ought to go for peace.

But, Sir, if we are to reason on the fact, I should think that it is the interest of Bonaparte to make peace. A lover of military glory, as that general must necessarily be, may he not think that his measure of glory is full—that it may be tarnished by a reverse of fortune, and can hardly be increased by any new laurels? He must feel that, in the situation to which he is now raised, he can no longer depend on his own fortune, his own genius, and his own talents, for a continuance of his success; he must be under the necessity of employing other generals, whose misconduct or incapacity might endanger his power, or whose triumphs even might affect the interest which he holds in the opinion of the French. Peace, then, would secure to him what he has achieved, and fix the inconstancy of fortune. But this will not be his only motive. He must see that France also requires a respite—a breathing interval to recruit her wasted strength. To procure her this respite would be, perhaps, the attainment of more solid glory, as well as the means of acquiring more solid power, than anything which he can hope to gain from arms and from the proudest triumphs. May he not then be zealous to gain this fame, the only species of fame, perhaps, that is worth acquiring? Nay, granting that his soul may still burn with the thirst of military exploits, is it not likely that he is disposed to yield to the feelings of the French people, and to consolidate his power by consulting their interests? I have a right to argue in this way, when suppositions of his insincerity are reasoned upon on the other side. Sir, these aspersions are in truth always idle, and even mischievous. I have been too long accustomed to hear imputations and calumnies thrown out upon great and honourable characters, to be much influenced by them. My honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) has paid this night a most just, deserved, and honourable tribute of applause to the memory of that great and unparalleled character who has been so recently lost to the world. I must, like him, beg leave to dwell a moment on the venerable George Washington, though I know that it is impossible for me to

bestow anything like adequate praise on a character which gave us, more than any other human being, the example of a perfect man; yet, good, great, and unexampled as General Washington was, I can remember the time when he was not better spoken of in this House than Bonaparte is now. The right honourable gentleman who opened this debate (Mr. Dundas) may remember in what terms of disdain, of virulence, and even of contempt, General Washington was spoken of by gentlemen on that side of the House. Does he not recollect with what marks of indignation any member was stigmatised as an enemy to his country who mentioned with common respect the name of General Washington? If a negotiation had then been proposed to be opened with that great man, what would have been said? "Would you treat with a rebel, a traitor! What an example would you not give by such an act!" I do not know whether the right honourable gentleman may not yet possess some of his old prejudices on the subject. I hope not. I hope by this time we are all convinced that a republican government, like that of America, may exist without danger or injury to social order or to established monarchies. They have happily shown that they can maintain the relations of peace and amity with other states: they have shown, too, that they are alive to the feelings of honour; but they do not lose sight of plain good sense and discretion. They have not refused to negotiate with the French, and they have accordingly the hopes of a speedy termination of every difference. We cry up their conduct, but we do not imitate it. At the beginning of the struggle, we were told that the French were setting up a set of wild and impracticable theories, and that we ought not to be misled by them—we could not grapple with theories. Now we are told that we must not treat because, out of the lottery, Bonaparte has drawn such a prize as military despotism. Is military despotism a theory? One would think that that is one of the practical things which ministers might understand, and to which they would have no particular objection. But what is our present conduct founded on but a theory, and that a most wild and ridiculous theory? What are we fighting for? Not for a principle; not for security; not for conquest even; but merely for an experiment and a speculation, to discover whether a gentleman at Paris may not turn out a better man than we now take him to be.

My honourable friend (Mr. Whitbread) has been censured for an opinion which he gave, and I think justly, that the

change of property in France since the Revolution must form an almost insurmountable barrier to the return of the ancient proprietors. "No such thing," says the right honourable gentleman; "nothing can be more easy. Property is depreciated to such a degree that the purchasers would easily be brought to restore the estates." I very much differ with him in this idea. It is the character of every such convulsion as that which has ravaged France that an infinite and indescribable load of misery is inflicted upon private families. The heart sickens at the recital of the sorrows which it engenders. No revolution implied, though it may have occasioned, a total change of property. The restoration of the Bourbons does imply it; and there is the difference. There is no doubt but that if the noble families had foreseen the duration and the extent of the evils which were to fall upon their heads, they would have taken a very different line of conduct. But they unfortunately flew from their country. The king and his advisers sought foreign aid. A confederacy was formed to restore them by military force, and as a means of resisting this combination, the estates of the fugitives were confiscated and sold. However compassion may deplore the case, it cannot be said that the thing is unprecedented. The people have always resorted to such means of defence. Now the question is, how this property is to be got out of their hands? If it be true, as I have heard, that the purchasers of national and forfeited estates amount to 1,500,000 persons, I see no hopes of their being forced to deliver up their property; nor do I even know that they ought. I question the policy, even if the thing were practicable; but I assert that such a body of new proprietors forms an insurmountable barrier to the restoration of the ancient order of things. Never was a revolution consolidated by a pledge so strong.

But, as if this were not of itself sufficient, Louis XVIII. from his retirement at Mittau puts forth a manifesto, in which he assures the friends of his house that he is about to come back with all the powers that formerly belonged to his family. He does not promise to the people a constitution which may tend to conciliate; but, stating that he is to come with all the *ancien régime*, they would naturally attach to it its proper appendages of bastilles, lettres de cachet, gabelle, etc. And the noblesse, for whom this proclamation was peculiarly conceived, would also naturally feel that if the monarch was to be restored to all his privileges, they surely were to be reinstated in their

estates without a compensation to the purchasers. Is this likely to make the people wish for the restoration of royalty? I have no doubt but there may be a number of Chouans in France, though I am persuaded that little dependence is to be placed on their efforts. There may be a number of people dispersed over France, and particularly in certain provinces, who may retain a degree of attachment to royalty: and how the government will contrive to compromise with that spirit, I know not. I suspect, however, that Bonaparte will try: his efforts have been turned to that object; and, if we may believe report, he has succeeded to a considerable degree. He will naturally call to his recollection the precedent which the history of France itself will furnish. The once formidable insurrection of the Huguenots was completely stifled, and the party conciliated, by the policy of Henry IV., who gave them such privileges and raised them so high in the government, as to make some persons apprehend danger therefrom to the unity of the empire. Nor will the French be likely to forget the revocation of the edict—one of the memorable acts of the house of Bourbon—an act which was never surpassed in atrocity, injustice, and impolicy by anything that has disgraced Jacobinism. If Bonaparte shall attempt some similar arrangement to that of Henry IV. with the Chouans, who will say that he is likely to fail? He will meet with no great obstacle to success from the influence which our ministers have established with the chiefs, or in the attachment and dependence which they have on our protection; for what has the right honourable gentleman told him, in stating the contingencies in which he will treat with Bonaparte? He will excite a rebellion in France—he will give support to the Chouans, if they can stand their ground; but he will not make common cause with them: for unless they can depose Bonaparte, send him into banishment, or execute him, he will abandon the Chouans and treat with this very man, whom, at the same time, he describes as holding the reins and wielding the powers of France for purposes of unexampled barbarity.

Sir, I wish the atrocities of which we hear so much, and which I abhor as much as any man, were, indeed, unexampled. I fear that they do not belong exclusively to the French. When the right honourable gentleman speaks of the extraordinary successes of the last campaign, he does not mention the horrors by which some of those successes were accompanied. Naples, for instance, has been, among others, what is called “delivered”;

and yet, if I am rightly informed, it has been stained and polluted by murders so ferocious, and by cruelties of every kind so abhorrent, that the heart shudders at the recital. It has been said, not only that the miserable victims of the rage and brutality of the fanatics were savagely murdered, but that, in many instances, their flesh was eaten and devoured by the cannibals, who are the advocates and the instruments of social order! Nay, England is not totally exempt from reproach, if the rumours which are circulated be true. I will mention a fact, to give ministers the opportunity, if it be false, of wiping away the stain that it must otherwise fix on the British name. It is said that a party of the republican inhabitants of Naples took shelter in the fortress of the Castel de Uova. They were besieged by a detachment from the royal army, to whom they refused to surrender, but demanded that a British officer should be brought forward, and to him they capitulated. They made terms with him under the sanction of the British name. It was agreed that their persons and property should be safe, and that they should be conveyed to Toulon. They were accordingly put on board a vessel, but before they sailed their property was confiscated, numbers of them taken out, thrown into dungeons, and some of them, I understand, notwithstanding the British guarantee, actually executed.

Where then, Sir, is this war, which on every side is pregnant with such horrors, to be carried? Where is it to stop? Not till you establish the house of Bourbon! And this you cherish the hope of doing because you have had a successful campaign. Why, Sir, before this you have had a successful campaign. The situation of the allies, with all they have gained, is surely not to be compared now to what it was when you had taken Valenciennes, Quesnoy, Condé, etc., which induced some gentlemen in this House to prepare themselves for a march to Paris. With all that you have gained, you surely will not say that the prospect is brighter now than it was then. What have you gained but the recovery of a part of what you before lost? One campaign is successful to you—another to them; and in this way, animated by the vindictive passions of revenge, hatred, and rancour, which are infinitely more flagitious even than those of ambition and the thirst of power, you may go on for ever; as, with such black incentives, I see no end to human misery. And all this without an intelligible motive—all this because you may gain a better peace a year or two hence! So that we are called upon to go on merely as a speculation—we

must keep Bonaparte for some time longer at war, as a state of probation. Gracious God, Sir! is war a state of probation? Is peace a rash system? Is it dangerous for nations to live in amity with each other? Is your vigilance, your policy, your common powers of observation, to be extinguished by putting an end to the horrors of war? Cannot this state of probation be as well undergone without adding to the catalogue of human sufferings? "But we must *pause*!" What! must the bowels of Great Britain be torn out—her best blood be spilt—her treasure wasted—that you may make an experiment? Put yourselves—oh! that you would put yourselves—in the field of battle, and learn to judge of the sort of horrors that you excite. In former wars a man might, at least, have some feeling, some interest, that served to balance in his mind the impressions which a scene of carnage and of death must inflict. If a man had been present at the battle of Blenheim, for instance, and had inquired the motive of the battle, there was not a soldier engaged who could not have satisfied his curiosity, and even, perhaps, allayed his feelings—they were fighting to repress the uncontrolled ambition of the grand monarch. But, if a man were present now at a field of slaughter, and were to inquire for what they were fighting: "Fighting!" would be the answer; "they are not fighting, they are *pausing*." "Why is that man expiring? Why is that other writhing with agony? What means this implacable fury?" The answer must be: "You are quite wrong, Sir, you deceive yourself.—They are not fighting.—Do not disturb them—they are merely *pausing*!—This man is not expiring with agony—that man is not dead—he is only pausing! Lord help you, Sir! they are not angry with one another; they have now no cause of quarrel—but their country thinks that there should be a pause. All that you see, Sir, is nothing like fighting—there is no harm, nor cruelty, nor bloodshed in it whatever—it is nothing more than a *political pause*!—it is merely to try an experiment—to see whether Bonaparte will not behave himself better than heretofore; and in the meantime we have agreed to a pause, in pure friendship!" And is this the way, Sir, that you are to show yourselves the advocates of order? You take up a system calculated to uncivilise the world, to destroy order, to trample on religion, to stifle in the heart, not merely the generosity of noble sentiment, but the affections of social nature; and in the prosecution of this system you spread terror and devastation all around you.

Sir, I have done. I have told you my opinion. I think you

ought to have given a civil, clear, and explicit answer to the overture which was fairly and handsomely made you. If you were desirous that the negotiation should have included all your allies, as the means of bringing about a general peace, you should have told Bonaparte so; but I believe you were afraid of his agreeing to the proposal. You took that method before. "Ay, but," you say, "the people were anxious for peace in 1797." I say they are friends to peace now; and I am confident that you will one day own it. Believe me, they are friends to peace; although, by the laws which you have made, restraining the expression of the sense of the people, public opinion cannot now be heard as loudly and unequivocally as heretofore. But I will not go into the internal state of this country. It is too afflicting to the heart to see the strides which have been made, by means of, and under the miserable pretext of this war, against liberty of every kind, both of speech and of writing; and to observe in another kingdom the rapid approaches to that military despotism which we affect to make an argument against peace. I know, Sir, that public opinion, if it could be collected, would be for peace, as much now as in 1797, and I know that it is only by public opinion—not by a sense of their duty—not by the inclination of their minds—that ministers will be brought, if ever, to give us peace. I conclude, Sir, with repeating what I said before: I ask for no gentleman's vote who would have reprobated the compliance of ministers with the proposition of the French government; I ask for no gentleman's support to-night who would have voted against ministers, if they had come down and proposed to enter into a negotiation with the French; but I have a right to ask—I know that in honour, in consistency, in conscience, I have a right to expect, the vote of every gentleman who would have voted with ministers in an address to his majesty diametrically opposite to the motion of this night.

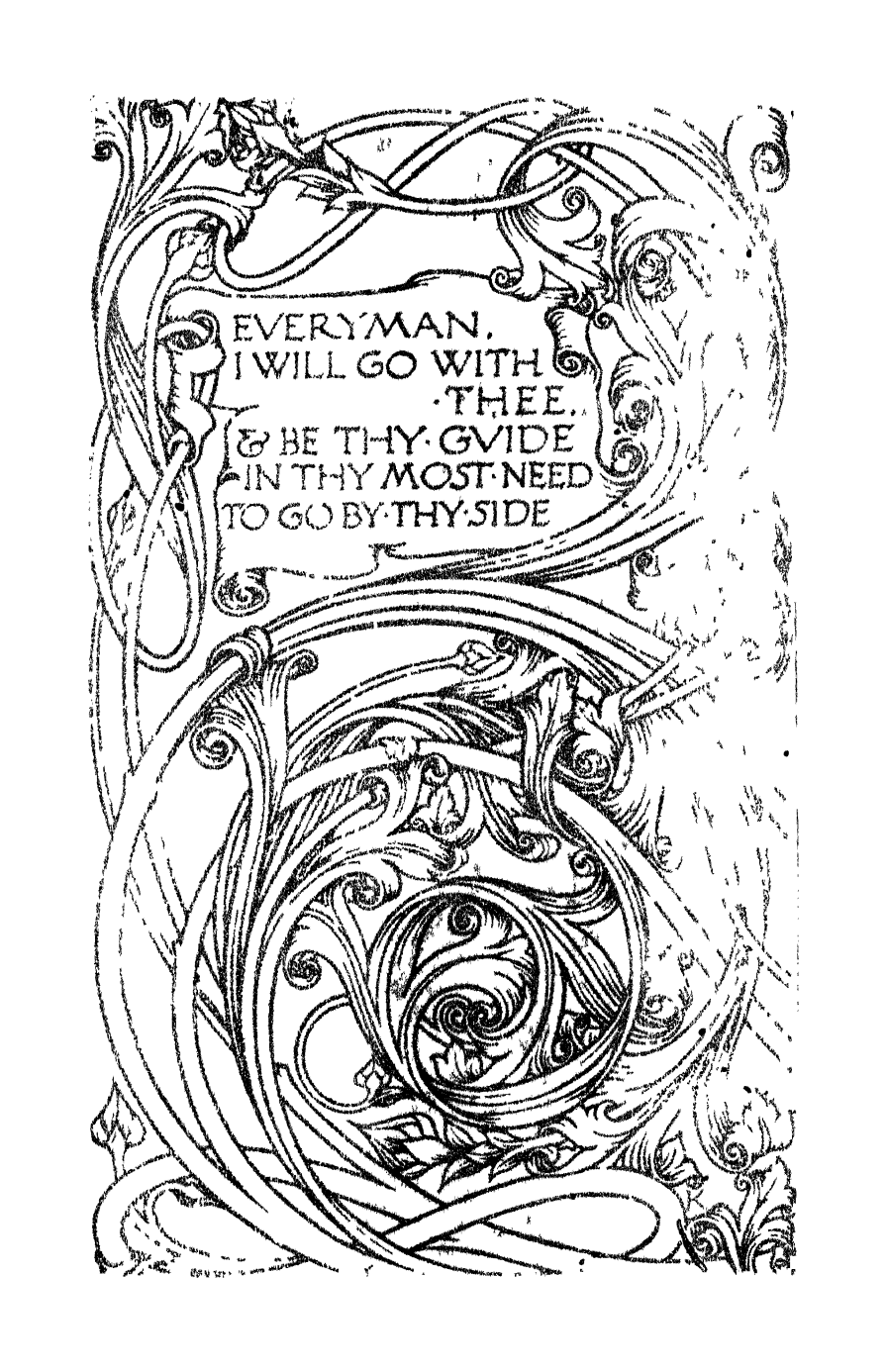
The House divided on the address:

<i>Tellers</i>			<i>Tellers</i>	
YEAS	{ Lord Hawkesbury } { Mr. Canning }	265.—	NOES	{ Mr. Whitbread } { Mr. Sheridan }
				64.



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EVERYMAN,  
I WILL GO WITH  
THEE.  
& BE THY GVIDE  
IN THY MOST NEED  
TO GO BY THY SIDE









